

Jun Terasawa



**OLD
ENGLISH
METRE**

AN INTRODUCTION

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METRE**

AN INTRODUCTION

OLD ENGLISH METRE: AN INTRODUCTION

Old English Metre offers an essential framework for the critical analysis of metrical structures and interpretations in Old English literature. Jun Terasawa's comprehensive introductory text covers the basics of Old English metre and reviews the current research in the field, emphasizing the interaction between Old English metre and components such as word-formation, word-choice, and grammar. He also covers the metre-related problems of dating, authorship, and the distinction between prose and verse.

Each chapter includes exercises and suggestions for further reading. Appendices provide possible answers to the exercises, tips for scanning half-lines, and brief definitions of metrical terms used. Examples in Old English are provided with literal modern English translations, with glosses added in the first three chapters to help beginners. The result is a comprehensive guide that makes important text-critical skills more readily available to Old English specialists and beginners alike.

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Old English Metre: An Introduction

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Preface

‘The lack of an elementary introduction to Old English metre has long been felt by teachers and by students alike,’ wrote Alan Bliss in his preface to *An Introduction to Old English Metre* in 1962. Bliss’s *Introduction* has long since served to meet the needs of teachers introducing Old English metre and of students studying the subject for the first time.

Since then, however, considerable advances have been made in the field of Old English metre. In particular, the last few decades have seen a flourishing revival of interest in Old English metrical studies. While the detailed statistical analyses by Bliss and his predecessor Eduard Sievers led to neat classifications of possible metrical patterns and pinpointed rarely attested patterns, attempts have recently been made to account for why the metre of Old English poetry should take the shape that Sievers and Bliss described, and why certain metrical patterns, whether alliterative or rhythmic, are almost consistently avoided in Old English (cf. Cable 1974, 1991; Russom 1987; Fujiwara 1990; Suzuki 1996a). Furthermore, with the help of a computerized database, a detailed description of Old English metre has been made possible on the basis of a much more extensive corpus than was available in Sievers’s and Bliss’s times (cf. Hucheson 1995). A few metrists have attempted to challenge the fundamental principles of the Sievers-Bliss theories, such as stress/rhythm-based metre and the four-position principle (cf. Hoover 1985; Obst 1987).

Due to a growing interest in Old English syntax after Bruce Mitchell’s monumental work (Mitchell 1985), much work has been done on Old English metre in relation to grammar and syntax. Hans Kuhn’s observations about the placement of stressed and unstressed words in the verse clause (commonly known as Kuhn’s Laws) have been tested against a more extensive corpus (cf. Momma 1997) while Sievers’s rhythmic types of half-lines have been reinterpreted with regard to the positions they can occupy in a verse clause (cf. Kendall 1991). Nakagawa (1982) and Macrae-Gibson (1986) reinterpret Sievers-Bliss’s rhythmic types according

to their syntactic structures.

Metre interacts not only with grammar and syntax but also with word-formation or the word-choice made by the poets. Old English poets tend to avoid certain metrical sequences in compounds, certain inflected forms of a given word, and certain suffixes, for example. Word-formation in the poetry is highly constrained on metrical grounds (cf. Terasawa 1989, 1992, 1994, 2001, 2007a).

Much-discussed topics relevant to Old English metre have continued to attract scholarly attention, including problems of dating Old English verse texts (cf. Amos 1980; Chase 1981; Fulk 1992, 2007b; Hutcheson 2004; Frank 2007) and problems of authorship (cf. Donoghue 1987b; Momma 1997; Terasawa 2005). Old English metre has also been placed in a comparative perspective with Middle English metre, other Germanic metres, and non-Germanic metres (cf. Cable 1991; Whitman 1993; Russom 1998; Suzuki 2004).

Despite the recent developments in research on Old English metre outlined above, Bliss's *Introduction* has not been revised to reap their fruits although it was reprinted in 1993 as a Subsidia volume of the *Old English Newsletter*. With a handful of exceptions (cf. Cassidy and Ringler 1971; Pope-Fulk 2001; McCully and Hilles 2005; Baker 2007),¹ recent Old English grammar books and readers often dispense with metrical matters, or at best content themselves with a brief introduction to the subject. Thus, the need for a new introductory book on Old English metre might be felt by scholars, teachers, and students alike, just as when Bliss published his *Introduction*.

This book is intended to achieve a twofold purpose. First, as an introductory book, it attempts to provide beginners with the basics of Old English metre, which will be described primarily in [chapters 1, 2, and 3](#). The gist of Old English metre can be obtained from [chapter 1](#), the first section of [chapter 2](#) ('Consonantal and Vocalic Alliteration'), and the first three sections of [chapter 3](#) ('Stress-words, Particles, and Proclitics,' 'Syllable and Foot,' and 'Five Rhythmic Types'). Those who want to learn more about alliteration and rhythm in Old English poetry should consult [chapter 4](#) as well as the rest of [chapters 2 and 3](#). Appendices B and C provide some tips for scanning half-lines and a brief definition of metrical terms used in the book respectively. Second, the book

provides an up-to-date view of current work in the field of Old English metre. Greater emphasis on the interaction between Old English metre and other components, such as word-formation/word-choice (cf. [chapter 5](#)) and grammar (cf. [chapter 6](#)), will be one of the distinctive features of the work. New light will be shed on the metre-related problems of dating, authorship, and the distinction between verse and prose (cf. [chapter 7](#)).

Information that is useful but of secondary importance is relegated to small type that beginners may skip over at first reading. (Such information is labelled with a single star (★) if it is useful for intermediate students, and with double stars (★★) if useful for advanced students/scholars.) While Bliss's *Introduction* is in part an outline of his own theory, this work, following the Sievers-Bliss tradition in principle, draws from any metrical theories available if they contribute to a better understanding of a given metrical phenomenon. Exercises and suggestions for further reading can be found in each chapter so that the book can serve as a textbook for the classroom or self-study. Possible answers to the exercises are provided in [Appendix A](#).

I shall also take up problems of textual criticism here. Given the recent trend of textual conservatism, many scholars, particularly editors of Old English verse texts, tend to be somewhat hesitant about emending texts based on metrical evidence alone, since they do not regard the rules of metre as rigid and reliable enough to support textual emendation (cf. Duggan 1988).² Of course, we must always be cautious about emending any manuscript readings and 'we must not force what looks metrically attractive on to a passage the likely sense and obvious syntax of which are against it.'³ At the same time, if a half-line or line shows any metrical irregularities in the light of firm statistical evidence, it might be at least worth making a closer examination of the relevant half-line or line, which might reveal grammatical, semantic and/or palaeographical anomalies otherwise unnoticed. Knowledge of metre, I believe, never ceases to be relevant to students working in the field of Old English poetry.

A few words about metrical 'rules' or 'laws,' which I often refer to when I take up questions of textual criticism. In most cases, I use these terms to indicate statistically confirmed tendencies but not categorical rules. The laws are not prescriptive, either. When they preferred certain metrical forms according to the rules, the

poets did not, I believe, make any deliberate choice of the 'right' pattern but intuitively felt which sounded metrically better.

A majority of the illustrative examples are taken from *Beowulf*, which has generally been regarded as the reference point for Old English metrical studies, but other verse texts are used as needed. For the convenience of beginners, most examples in Old English are provided with literal modern English translations with glosses also added in the first three introductory chapters.

Acknowledgments

The final draft of this book was prepared during a period of sabbatical leave from April 2008 through March 2009 when I was a visiting scholar at Harvard University. I would like to thank my host institution as well as the University of Tokyo for enabling me to pursue this book project.

A few paragraphs of [chapter 4.1](#) were taken in revised form from my ‘*Beowulf* niokeru 3 onsetsu ika hangyo nitsuite’ [Notes on Half-lines of Three or Fewer Syllables in *Beowulf*] in *Essays on Beowulf and Other Medieval English Literature in Memory of Kinshiro Oshitari*; portions of [chapter 5](#) appeared in ‘Agent-Nouns in -end: The Use of Alternative Plurals as Metrical Variants in Old English Poetry’ in *Language and Beyond: A Festschrift for Hiroshi Yonekura on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ‘The Scarcity of Formations in -ere in Old English Poetry’ in *Anglia*, and ‘Metrical Constraints on Old English Compounds’ in *Poetica*; and part of [chapter 6.1.3](#) was published under the title ‘The Weak Man in Old English Poetry’ in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. I am grateful to the editors and publishers concerned for permission to reuse material.

In the process of writing the book, I have been fortunate to have the support and guidance of a number of colleagues and friends, and I especially wish to thank the following: Eric Stanley, without whose wisdom, scholarship, and insight the present book would be much the poorer; Rick Russom, who has been a mentor since I wrote my dissertation and as ever gave invariably constructive suggestions; Daniel Donoghue, who made my stay at Harvard productive through stimulating discussions on Old English metre.

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OLD ENGLISH METRE: AN INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

Overview

This chapter serves as a preliminary to the following chapters. I provide a sketch of two important features of Old English metre, alliteration and rhythm. We shall also see how these features relate to grammar and word-choice in the poetry and how this knowledge will lead to the better reading of extant poetic texts.

1.1 Alliteration

One of the most conspicuous features of Old English poetry is **ALLITERATION**, a repetition of the same sound at the beginning of two or more stressed words in a line (alliterating letters are in boldface type):¹

fēasceaft funden. Hē þæs frōfre gebād (Beo 7)
 destitute found he for-that consolation experienced
 [(he was) found destitute. For that, he lived to see consolation]

As indicated by spacing, a (long) line is usually divided by a CAESURA or pause between the ON-VERSE (also known as the a-verse or the first half-line) and the OFF-VERSE (also known as the b-verse or the second half-line).² Each verse or half-line usually contains two LIFTS or rhythmically stressed syllables, which can participate in alliteration. Lifts are marked with a stroke (/). In the line above, alliteration falls on two lifts of the on-verse and only on the first lift of the off-verse, but there are long lines in which only the first lift of each half-line alliterates. Alliterating lifts are marked 'A' and non-alliterating lifts marked 'X' and 'Y':

on flōdes æht feor gewītan (Beo 42)
in of-ocean possession far go
A X A Y

[(many treasures should) go far into the possession of the ocean]

Placement of alliteration is rule-governed. In *Beowulf* and other Old English poetry, for instance, DOUBLE ALLITERATION (i.e., the occurrence of two alliterating lifts in a half-line) is allowed in the on-verse but not in the off-verse. Thus, the following hypothetical lines with double alliteration in the off-verse would not be metrically acceptable in Old English. An asterisk indicates that an example is unmetrical or unattested:³

/	/	/	/																										
*m	æ	r	n	e be m	æ	s	t	e.	P	æ	r w	æ	s m	ā	ð	ð	u	m m	o	n	i	g	(cf. <i>Beo</i> 36)						
f	a	m	o	u	s	b	y	m	a	s	t	t	h	e	r	e	w	a	s	t	r	e	a	s	m	a	n	y	
A		A							A		A																		

[the famous one by the mast. There was many a treasure]

/	/	/	/																							
*m	æ	r	n	e	p	ē	o	d	e	n.	P	æ	r w	æ	s m	ā	ð	ð	u	m m	o	n	i	g		
f	a	m	o	u	s	l	o	r	d	t	h	e	r	e	w	a	s	t	r	e	a	s	m	a	n	y
A		X										A		A												

[the famous lord. There was many a treasure]

The off-verse is subject to a further constraint: only the first lift can participate in alliteration; in fact, it must participate in alliteration. The following off-verses with alliteration only on the second lift would have sounded anomalous to an Old English audience:

/	/	/	/																				
*w	æ	s s	e g	r	i	m	m	a g	æ	s	t	h	ā	t	e	n G	r	e	n	d	e	l	(cf. <i>Beo</i> 102)
w	a	s	t	h	e	f	i	e	r	c	e	d	e	m	o	n	c	a	l	l	e	d	
A		A		X		A																	

[the fierce demon was called Grendel]

/	/	/	/																					
*o	n	f	l	ō	d	e	s	æ	h	t	g	e	w	ī	t	a	n	f	e	o	r	(cf. <i>Beo</i> 42 above)		
i	n	o	f	-	o	c	e	a	n	p	o	s	s	e	s	s	i	o	n	g	o	f	a	r
A		X						Y		A														

Although less strictly than in the off-verse, the alliterative pattern is also constrained in the on-verse, which rarely allows the second lift alone to take part in alliteration:

/ / / /
 *on æht flōdes feor gewītan
 in possession of-ocean far go
 X A A Y

(cf. *Beo* 42 above)

To sum up, the basic alliterative schemes in a long line of Old English poetry are represented as [AA: AY] and [AX: AY], where the colon indicates the caesura between the two half-lines.

EXERCISE: Alliterative Patterns

Observe the alliterative patterns in the following half-lines. Lifts are marked with a stroke (/). Which lines are metrically acceptable and which unacceptable? Provide an explanation for your judgment.

- 1) / / / /
 feorran ond nēan þā þū nū hafast
 far and near that you now have
 [(gifts) that you now have from far and near]
- 2) / / / /
 mildum wordum, swā sceal man dōn
 generous with-words as shall one do
 [with generous words as one ought to do]
- 3) / / / /
 wordum bewægned, ond gold wunden
 with-words offered and gold twisted
 [(invitation was) offered in words and twisted gold (was presented)]
- 4) / / / /
 windige weallas. Wyrð oft nereð
 windy cliffs fate often saves
 [the windy cliffs. Often fate saves (an doomed man)]
- 5) / / / /
 Ðær was on hring-sele hæleþa hleahtor
 there was in ring-hall men's laughter
 [There was in the ring-hall laughter among men]

1.2 How Alliteration Affects Grammar and Word-choice

Knowledge of the alliterative patterns described above helps us to see why in the following off-verse the *Beowulf* poet used the 'noun-adjective' order, for which prose writers would have resorted to the reverse order. 'N' and 'ADJ' stand for 'noun' and 'adjective'

respectively:

/	/	/	/	
hæleð	hīofende,	hlāford	lēofne	(Beo 3142)
		N	ADJ	
men	lamenting	lord	beloved	
[the lamenting men (laid down) the beloved lord]				

The 'normal' word order (i.e., adjective-noun) would result in an unmetrical off-verse with alliteration on the second lift rather than the first:

/	/	/	/	
*hæleð	hīofende,	lēofne	hlāford	
		ADJ	N	
men	lamenting	beloved	lord	

Note that the adjective *leof* precedes the noun in the off-verse below, where alliteration falls on /l/:

/	/	/	/	
alēdon	þā	lēofne	þeoden	(Beo 34)
laid	then	beloved	king	
[then (they) laid down the beloved king]				

An understanding of alliteration also provides an explanation for the abundance of compounds in Old English poetry, another significant feature of traditional diction. Consider the following line in *Beowulf*:

/	/	/	/	
gūðbilla	nān,	grētan	noelde	(Beo 803)
of-battle-swords	none	touch	not-would	
[none of the battle-swords would touch (the foe)]				

It is true that in *gūð-bill* 'battle-sword,' *gūð* adds a poetical glory to the simple word. The first compound element, however, has a semantically redundant relation to the second. Swords generally exist for the sake of battle. The poet uses this pleonastic compound instead of the simple word *bill* because it gives alliteration on the sound *g* between *gūðbilla* and *grētan*. Similarly, the poet might substitute *hilde-* for *gūð-* to provide alliteration on *h*, as in the following line:

/ / / /
 hildebille; heaþoræs fornam (Beo 557)
 with-battle-sword battle-storm took-away
 [with the battle-sword; the force of battle carried off (the sea-beast)]

1.3 Rhythm

The subtleties of Old English metre reside not only in patterns of alliteration but also in rules of syllable count and stress. Each half-line normally contains two lifts or rhythmically stressed syllables whereas the number of unstressed syllables may vary. Thus, unlike most post-Conquest poetry, Old English verse texts do not strictly regulate the number of syllables either in a half-line or in a line: some half-lines consist of four syllables (i.e., two rhythmically stressed syllables and two unstressed syllables) and others of nine or even more (i.e., two rhythmically stressed syllables and seven or more unstressed syllables), excluding so-called hypermetric verses. ‘a’ and ‘b’ after a line number (e.g., 66a, 1298b) represent the a-verse (i.e., the on-verse) and the b-verse (i.e., the off-verse), respectively:

/ /
 georne hýrdon (Beo 66a)
 willingly heard
 [(they) willingly obeyed (him)]

 / /
 þone ðe hēo on ræste ābrēat (Beo 1298b)
 whom she on rest killed
 [whom she killed on the resting-place]

Although the number of syllables might vary in a half-line, there is one fundamental requirement: each half-line must contain at least four syllables, as we shall see in more detail in [4.1](#). This requirement interacts with poetic grammar and word-choice.

1.4 How Rhythm Affects Grammar and Word-choice

In Old English, both uninflected and inflected infinitives occur after *tō*. The inflected ending in *-anne* is in origin the dative case of a verbal noun:

Mæ̅l is mē tō *feran*
time is for-me to go
[It is time for me to go]

(*Beo* 316a)

tō *healdanne*
to hold
[to hold]

(*Beo* 1731a)

The use of inflected *healdanne* is due to metrical requirements.⁴ The uninflected *healdan* would make 1731a too short a verse, with only three syllables:

*tō healdan

Needless to say, good poets like the *Beowulf* poet could recast the (half-)line entirely to avoid the problem altogether rather than being forced to choose between metrical variants. Yet the availability of two semantically and grammatically equivalent forms provides a convenient option in verse-making.

EXERCISE: The Four-syllable Principle and Word-choice

The *Beowulf* poet sometimes satisfies the ‘four syllable per half-line’ requirement by choosing between two morphological variants. In the epic, for instance, there appear eleven instances of *gēn* ‘still’ while the alternative form with the suffix *-a* (derived from the adverb *ā* ‘ever’) is attested twice. Consider the following half-line where one of the two instances of *gēna* occurs:

fremmað *gēna*
attend to still
[now attend to (the people’s need)]

(*Beo* 2800b)

Why do you think the poet used the rarer form *gēna* instead of ordinary *gēn*?

1.5 Textual Criticism

Old English metre can be of great help in textual criticism. Corruptions are often found in Old English manuscripts due to

scribal error or physical damage in the course of transmission. When corruptions are not obvious at first glance, knowledge of Old English metre can help us to identify them and guide us toward better readings. Consider the following line as it appears in the *Beowulf* manuscript:

þæt hē for handgripe mīnum scolde (Beo 965)
that he for hand-grip my should
[so that he should (lie struggling for life) because of my hand-grip]

This is part of a speech made by Beowulf after defeating Grendel: the hero has tried to kill the monster by his handgrip (*handgripe*) but Grendel has vanished, leaving his arm behind. Although it does not exhibit any semantic or grammatical problem, the line lacks alliteration. As the word *mund* is synonymous with *hand*, we may suspect that the original reading was *mundgripe*:

þæt hē for *mundgripe* mīnum scolde

Most editors of *Beowulf* today adopt this emendation on the assumption that *handgripe* was introduced by the scribe, who would have been more familiar with *hand* than with archaic *mund*.⁵

Let us now turn to another half-line from *Beowulf* as it appears in the manuscript:

brād brūnecg (Beo 1546a)
broad bright-edged
[broad (and) bright-edged]

The two adjectives in juxtaposition refer to the dagger drawn by Grendel's mother. Syntactically, this verse is legitimate, since Old English poetry allows so-called asyndetic constructions where two elements are conjoined without a conjunction. With only three syllables, however, the verse is too short. To amend the metrical difficulty, most editors insert the conjunction *and* between the two adjectives:

brād [ond] brūnecg

This conjecture has been widely supported, perhaps in part because the conjunction appears in a parallel half-line from the

Battle of Maldon (*brād and brūneccg* 163a).⁶

In the following chapters, we explore the interesting realm of Old English metre with reference to alliteration, rhythm, how these features affect the word-formation/word-choice and grammar of poetry, and how knowledge of Old English metre can lead to better understanding of the poetic texts. Let us start with alliteration, the most noticeable feature of Old English poetry.

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

For readings on alliteration and rhythm in Old English poetry and their relevance to grammar and word-choice, see ‘References and Suggestions for Further Reading’ in [chapters 2](#) through [6](#). Gade and Fulk (2000) provide a more detailed bibliography of Old English and Germanic alliterative metre. See also the yearly updates in relevant sections of ‘Old English Bibliography’ and ‘The Year’s Work in Old English Studies’ in the *Old English Newsletter*.

The importance of metre for textual studies is emphasized by Fulk (1997) and Bredehoft (2005b). Irving also recommends that when they encounter metrical irregularities, editors should ‘suggest a remedy where possible or supply an obvious word’ rather than ‘[s]crapping or ignoring the formal system of verse’ (1998: 17). For scepticism about the use of metrical evidence for emendation, see Duggan (1988) and Niles (1994) among others.

2 Alliteration

Overview

Alliteration is one of the most significant traits of Old English poetry. The alliterating words usually have the same initial sound, as in *fēasceaft funden*. / *Hē þæs frōfre gebād* (*Beo* 7) discussed at the beginning of the preceding chapter. This is, however, not the whole story. Although they share the same initial consonant, *stān* ‘stone’ and *sand* ‘sand’ do not form an alliterating pair in Old English verse. On the other hand, *æþelingas* ‘nobles’ and *ellen* ‘courage,’ which have different initial vowels, are regarded as an alliterating pair. What exactly makes two sounds suitable for alliteration? As we saw in [chapter 1](#), the placement of alliteration is highly regulated. Why did Old English poets avoid such a line as **wæs se grimma gæst / hāten Grendel*, where the off-verse (following the slash) has alliteration only on the second lift? Does one part of speech take precedence in alliteration over another part of speech? And while alliteration clearly plays the leading part, what position does end-rhyme hold in the Old English poetic corpus? Let us begin by examining consonantal and vocalic alliteration.

2.1 Consonantal and Vocalic Alliteration

In Old English poetry, as we have already seen, the two half-lines are linked by alliteration, a repetition of the initial sound (of a stressed syllable) in two or more words:

sē ðe gryresīðas	gegān dorste	(<i>Beo</i> 1462)
who horror-expeditions	go dared	
[who dared to go on dreadful expeditions]		

For consonantal alliteration, repetition of a single consonant usually suffices. In the instance above, *gryresīðas* and *-gān* alliterate on /g/. Since they are normally unstressed, prefixes like *ge-* do not take part in alliteration.

ond on spēð wrecan spel gerāde (*Beo* 873)
and in success recite story apt
[and (he began to) successfully tell an apt story]

Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in (*Beo* 19)
Scyld's son Danish-lands in
[the son of Scyld (was renowned) in the Danish lands]

sceame sceandlice þe þīnes siðes hēr (PPs 68.7.2)
 shame shamefully who of-your-journey here
 [(No one shall have) disgrace shamefully who (waits for) your journey
 here]

In Old English, there are two varieties of *g*, one velar (as in the initial *g* of Present-day English *gas*) and the other palatalized (as in the initial *y* of Present-day English *yes*). At the beginning of a word, palatal *g* occurs before front vowels (e.g., /i, e, y/) and diphthongs beginning with front vowels. For the reader's convenience, this variety of *g* is marked with a dot above it, thus *g̊*, when alliteration matters. In so-called classical poems like *Beowulf*, these two sounds (originally identical) are usually treated as equivalent for purposes of alliteration. In the line below, velar *g* in

God alliterates with the palatalized counterpart in *geong* and *geardum*:

geong in geardum, þone God sende (Beo 13)
young in dwellings whom God sent
[a young (son was born) in the court, whom God had sent]

In the *Battle of Maldon*, which was obviously composed after the year of the battle (i.e., AD 991), a distinction is made between the two different *g*'s, probably because the late poet no longer adhered to the earlier metrical practice.¹ Thus, the *Maldon* poet allows matching between velar *g*'s or between palatalized *g*'s, but not between different *g*'s (see 7.1). In the following half-lines from *Maldon*, the velar *g*'s alliterate with each other in the first instance whereas in the second instance the palatalized *g*'s form an alliterating pair:

gār tō gūþe. Hē hæfde gōd geþanc (Mald 13)
spear to battle he had good thought
[(he carried) his spear to the battle. He had a firm mind]

gæaro and gæornful, gylpwordum spræc (Mald 274)
ready and eager with-boasting-words spoke
[(he stood) ready and eager, spoke with vaunting words]

Just as in the case of the two different *g*'s, alliteration occurs between the two varieties of word-initial *c*-, i.e., velar *c* (as in the initial *k* of Present-day English *king*) and palatal *c* (as in the initial *ch* of Present-day English *chill*; marked with a dot above). (Palatal *c* occurs in the same environment as palatal *g*.) Interestingly, the *Maldon* poet, who avoided alliterating between the different *g*'s, allowed alliteration between the different *c*'s, although alliteration on the letter 'c' occurs only once:

cāfne mid his cynne, þæt wæs Ċeolan sunu (Mald 76)₂
valiant amid his family that was Ceola's son
[(he was) valiant amid his family, he was a son of Ceola]

The initial consonant *h*- can be treated as silent. In *Juliana*, the proper name *Heliseus* always alliterates with words that begin with a vowel:

Heliseus ehstrēam sōhte (Jul 673)
Eleusius sea sought
[Eleusius went to sea]

But a word with initial *h-* could be ambivalent. In *Beowulf*, the adverb *hraðe* ‘quickly’ alliterates with (*ge*)*rymed* and *rica* in line 1975 whereas the same word also alliterates on /h/ in lines like 1576:

Hraðe wæs gerȳmed, swā se rīca bebēad (Beo 1975)
quickly was cleared as the powerful-one commanded
[(The floor) was quickly cleared, as the powerful one commanded]

hilderince, ac hē hraþe wolde (Beo 1576)
to-battle-warrior but he quickly wished
[(The sword was not useless) to the warrior but he quickly wanted (to repay)]

In the *Beowulf* manuscript, the name of Hrothgar’s courtier appears as *Hunferð* with initial *h-* (cf. also ll. 530, 1165, 1488):

Hunferð mapelode, Ecglāfes bearn (Beo 499)
Unferth spoke Ecglaf’s son
[Unferth, Ecglaf’s son, spoke]

Since this name always alliterates with a vowel, it is likely that *Unferð* was the form intended by the poet—thus ‘h’ in *Hunferð* has often been omitted in editions of *Beowulf*. The scribal addition of inorganic *h-* would be due to analogical influence of Germanic names in *Hun-*, such as *Hūnlāfing* (cf. *Beo* 1143), *Hūnlāf*, and the like.³

In Old English poetry, alliteration may occur between initial vowels:

egsode eorlas, syððan ærest wearð (Beo 6)
terrified men after first became
[(he) terrified men, after (he) was first (found destitute)]

æne ofer ȳðe umborwesende (Beo 46)
alone over waves being-a-child
[(they sent him forth) alone across the waves being still a child]

As we see from the instances above, vocalic alliteration can take place between different vowels/diphthongs, and in fact alliteration of the same vowels tends to be avoided. The absence of identical vocalic alliteration might suggest that what really alliterates in vocalic alliteration is not the vowels but an underlying prevocalic ‘glottal stop’ /ʔ/—the sound that is heard in Present-day English between adjacent vowels as in *co-operate*.

EXERCISE: Consonantal and Vocalic Alliteration

Identify which sounds alliterate in the following lines from *Beowulf*:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1) geongum gārwigan gēoƿe gefremman
young spear-warrior help perform
[(the mail-coat could not) provide the young spear-warrior with any help] | (Beo 2674) |
| 2) cūþe næssas; čēol up geþrang
well-known headlands ship up pressed
[the well-known headlands; the ship pressed forward] | (Beo 1912) |
| 3) stod on stapole, geseah stēapne hrōf
stood on steps saw steep roof
[(he) stood on the steps, saw the lofty roof] | (Beo 926) |
| 4) ideƿe tō efnanne, þeah ðe hīo ænlicu sƿ
woman to perform though she peerless be
[for a woman to perform, even though she may be peerless in beauty] | (Beo 1941) |
| 5) Āris, rīces weard, uton hraþe fēran
arise-of-kingdom guardian let-us quickly go
[Stand up, guardian of the kingdom, let us go quickly] | (Beo 1390) |

2.2 Alliterative Patterns in the Line and Half-line

2.2.1 Anomalous Alliteration

As we saw in 1.1, there is a rather strict constraint on the distribution of the alliterating syllables in a line: the off-verse allows only the first lift to take part in alliteration. Hence breaches of this constraint are symptoms of textual corruption. In the *Beowulf* manuscript, there are four apparent instances of double alliteration in the off-verse:

Ðā wæs heal hroden then was hall covered [Then the hall was covered]	(Beo 1151b)
--	-------------

hilde gehnægdon in-battle humbled [(they) humbled (him) in battle]	(Beo 2916b)
--	-------------

in ēowrum gūðgeatawum in your war-equipments [in your war-equipments]	(Beo 395b)
---	------------

þæt ic mid sweorde ofslōh
 that I with sword slew
 [that I slew (sea-monsters) with a sword]

(*Beo* 574b)

In the first two instances, as inorganic *h* is sometimes added to the beginning of a word in the epic (cf. *Hunferð* discussed above in 2.1 and *hnægde* [= *nægde* ‘addressed’] 1318), *hroden* and (*ge*)*hnægdon* should be emended to *roden* ‘reddened’ and *genægdon* ‘attacked’ respectively. In the third instance, it has been suggested that the second element of *gūð-geatawum* could be slightly altered to *ge-tāwum* ‘apparatus’ where the unstressed prefix *ge-* would not alliterate. These emendations, which are palaeographically as well as metrically plausible, have been accepted in most recent editions of *Beowulf*.

EXERCISE: To Emend or Not to Emend

In the last instance above (*Beo* 574b) where double alliteration occurs in the off-verse, consult the editions of *Beowulf* available to you and check whether the editors follow the manuscript reading or provide an emendation. Do you support an emendation? If not, give reasons.

2.2.2 Crossed and Transverse Alliteration

Besides the regular alliterative patterns (i.e., [AA: AX], [AX: AY], or rarely [XA: AY]), there appear sporadic instances of ornate alliterative patterns. The following line shows what is called **CROSSED ALLITERATION**, in which all four lifts in a line participate in alliteration in the pattern [AB: AB]. Alliteration between the second and fourth lift should be regarded as ornamental and distinguished from the systematic alliteration between the first and third lift:

snotra fengel, nū ic eom sīðes fūs
 wise king now I am of-journey ready
 A B A B

(*Beo* 1475)

[(Be mindful,) wise king, now I am ready for the venture]

There occurs another type of ornate alliteration, [AB: BA], named **TRANSVERSE ALLITERATION**, though it is less frequent than the

pattern [AB: AB]:⁴

brūnfāgne	helm,	hringde	byrnan	(Beo 2615)
shining	helmet	ringed	corslet	
A	B	B	A	
[the shining helmet, the corslet made of ring-mail]				

A more intricate use of alliteration (sometimes called ‘linked alliteration’) can be observed in *Elene*, a verse rendering of the legend of the finding of the Cross by St Helena:⁵

Here wīcode,
eorlas ymb æðeling, ēgstrēame nēah
on nēaweste nihtlangne fyrst,
þæs þe hīe fēonda gefær fyrmost gesægon.
 Þā wearð on slæpe sylfum ætƿwed
þām cāsere, þær hē on corðre swæf,
sigerðofum gesegen swefnes wōma.
 Þūhte him wlitescȳne on weres hāde
hwīt ond hīwbeorht hæleða nāthwylc
geƿwed ænlicra þonne hē ær oððe gīð
gesēge under swegle (El 65b–75a)

[The army encamped—the warriors (were) around the prince—near the river-stream in their neighbourhood for the night period, after they had first seen the expedition of their enemies. Then (there) was revealed in sleep to the emperor himself, as he slept among his company, a vision of a dream (was) seen by the triumphant man. (It) seemed to him a beautiful (being) in human form, white and radiant, some man appeared more beautiful than he had seen early or late under the sky.]

Note that in the passage above the initial sound of the second lift in the off-verse often anticipates the alliteration in the following line: the last word *nēah* in line 66 is, for instance, alliteratively linked with *nēaweste* and *nihtlangne* in the next line. The sounds in linked alliteration are underlined.

2.2.3 Explaining Alliterative Patterns

Why does only the first lift of the off-verse take part in alliteration but not both or only the second lift? And why is it rare to find on-verses in which only the second lift takes part in alliteration if we disregard the questionable type [XA: AY] where weakly stressed elements comprise the first lift in the on-verse? Consider first the

following half-line that consists exclusively of a compound. For the reader's convenience, a hyphen is inserted between compound elements:

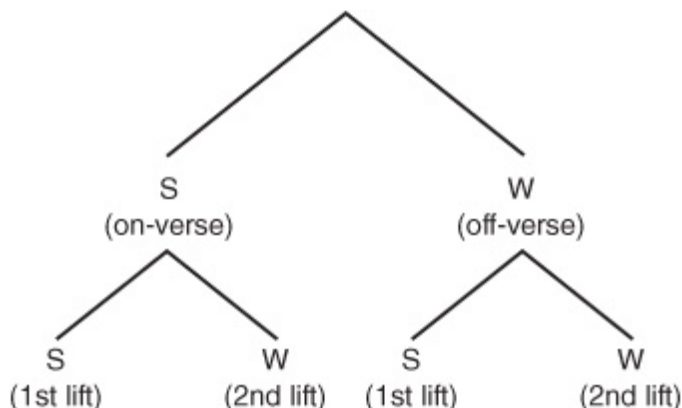
$\begin{array}{l} / \quad / \\ \text{hilde-lēoman} \\ [\text{battle-g}|\text{leamer}] \end{array}$
(*Beo* 1143b, 2583a)

$\begin{array}{l} / \quad / \\ \text{mere-liðende} \\ [\text{sea-farers}] \end{array}$
(*Beo* 255a)

Half-lines of this sort, which often occur in Old English poetry, would suggest that the metrical structure of a half-line ‘mimics’ the stress pattern of a compound: just as the stress on the first element (i.e., *hilde-*, *mere-*) is stronger than that on the second element (i.e., *-lēoman*, *-liðende*), so the first lift in a half-line receives stronger rhythmic stress than the second lift.

The metrical structure of a long line also reflects the compound stress pattern in that the on-verse is metrically more prominent than the off-verse. Consequently, double alliteration can occur in the on-verse but is not allowed in the off-verse. The metrical structure of a line and a half-line is represented in the following tree diagram:⁶

Metrical Tree Structure of a Line and a Half-line (S and W stand for ‘metrically strong’ and ‘metrically weak’ respectively.)



This metrical structure correctly predicts the distribution of alliteration in a line and a half-line: as the second lift of the off-

verse governed by two W's is the weakest metrical constituent, it should not alliterate; on the other hand, the first lifts of both half-lines, which are the stronger metrical constituents in their respective half-lines, always take part in alliteration.

2.3 The Alliterative Rule of Precedence

Let us take another look at the pattern of alliteration with reference to the parts of speech of alliterating words:

ellen fremedon (Beo 3b)
courage performed
N FV
[(they) performed courageous deeds]

Geseah hē in recede (Beo 728a)
saw he in hall
FV N
[He saw (many warriors) in the hall]

In these half-lines consisting of a noun (N) and a finite verb (FV), regardless of the order of the two elements, alliteration falls on the former (i.e., *ellen* 'courage' and *recede* 'hall') but not on the latter (i.e., *fremedon* 'performed,' *geseah* 'saw'). In Old English poetry, a nominal (including an adjective, a participle, and an infinitive as well as a noun) normally takes precedence in alliteration over a finite verb. This priority of a nominal over a finite verb is known as the **ALLITERATIVE RULE OF PRECEDENCE**.

★★ Breaches of the Rule of Precedence

The Alliterative Rule of Precedence is violated in the following off-verse from *Beowulf* where the finite verb precedes the two nouns in alliteration:

seah on enta geweorc (Beo 2717b)
saw on giants' work
FV N N
[(he) looked at the work of giants]

To remedy this anomaly, Donoghue (1987b: 38) has suggested that the sequence *seah on* be regarded as a scribal corruption of the infinitive *sēon*, which depends on the main verb *giong* 'went' in verse 2715a. Note that infinitives are metrically as important

as nouns. Although it is rather rare for the verb to have priority in alliteration over the noun in *Beowulf*, breaches of the Alliterative Rule of Precedence do occur in the epic (cf. 1128b, 1137b, 1327b, 1441b, 1537a, 1548b, 1872b, 2544b, 2863b, 2980b) and more frequently in the other verse texts (cf. *Sat* 631b; *Mald* 7a, 127b, 128b, 240b, 242b). The violations are especially noticeable in the off-verse where the demand for alliteration on the first lift is pressing. Thus, the reinterpretation of *seah on* as an infinitive might not be necessary.

If an on-verse contains two nominals, say a noun and an adjective, alliteration falls on both words or on the word at the left, but not on the word at the right alone:

swæse gesiþas (Beo 29a)
own retainers
[(his) own retainers]

lange hwile (Beo 16a)
long while
[for a long while]

In verse 16a, although syntactically the noun *hwile* ‘while’ serves as the head of the noun phrase, the adjective *lange* ‘long’ at the left alliterates in precedence to the noun. This tendency is called **LEFT DOMINANCE**, which is considered to be a manifestation of the compound stress pattern (SW) at the half-line level (cf. 2.2.3 above).⁷ Interestingly, breaches of this principle occur in a late poem:

Ælfere and Maccus

(Mald 80a)

Although the two proper nouns are of equal metrical prominence, it is only the right element (i.e., *Maccus*) that alliterates.

EXERCISE: Breaches of the Alliterative Rules

As mentioned above, the *Battle of Maldon* often shows irregularities in alliteration. Consider the following half-lines from this late poem and explain how the use of

alliteration deviates from the norm. Alliterating letters are in bold type.

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1) he let him þa of handon
he let him then off hands
[he then let (his hawk fly) off his hands] | (Mald 7a) |
| 2) hwæt þis folc segeð
what this people says
[what this nation says] | (Mald 45b) |
| 3) sē was hāten Wulfstān
he was called Wulfstan
[he was called Wulfstan] | (Mald 75b) |
| 4) scyldburh tōbrocen
shield-wall broken
[the shield-wall (was) broken] | (Mald 242a) |
| 5) Þurstānes sunu
Thurstan's son
[the son of Thurstan] | (Mald 298a) |

Although alliteration normally falls on nouns, adjectives, and verbs, weak forms like pronouns and prepositions occasionally receive rhythmic stress and participate in alliteration:

gehēdde under heofenum þonne hē sylfa (Beo 505)
might-care-for under heavens than he himself
[(any other man) might care for (more glories) under the heavens than he himself]

on þām dæge þysse lifes (Beo 197)
on that day this of-life
[at that time of this life]

folces gefylled beforan þissum (Brun 67)
of-people killed before this
[(no greater number) of people (has been) killed before this]

In the first instance, perhaps for the sake of emphasis, the personal pronoun forms the first lift of the off-verse so as to alliterate. In the second instance, which seems to be formulaic (cf. *Beo* 790, 806), alliteration on the demonstratives *þām* and *þysse* might indicate rhetorical contrast between the distant past and the contemporary Anglo-Saxon period. In the verse from the *Battle of Brunanburh*, the stem syllable of the preposition *beforan* 'before' alliterates on /f/, bringing into focus the unprecedented cost in casualties.

2.4 Rhyme

In Old English and other Germanic languages, primary stress normally falls on the initial syllable of a word (except for words with certain prefixes). It naturally follows that end-rhyme plays a restricted role in Old English verse, usually serving as an optional embellishment to the verse-organizing alliteration. There appear occasional rhyming pairs such as *frōd ond gōd* ‘wise and good’ (*Beo* 279), *sāel ond mǣl* ‘proper time and occasion’ (*Beo* 1008), *wordum ond bordum* ‘with words and shields’ (*El* 24) and even a rhyming trio like *flōd blōd gewōd* ‘blood pervaded the flood’ (*Ex* 463). In the following verse from *Beowulf*, rhyme is found between the verse-final words in a line. Here rhyme as well as alliteration links the on-verse to the off-verse:

fylle gefægon; fægere gepægon (*Beo* 1014)
in-feasting rejoiced courteously drank
[(they) rejoiced in feasting; (their kinsmen) courteously drank]

Such verse-final rhyme more often occurs in late poems like the *Battle of Maldon* (cf. also *Mald* 42, 282, 309):

æfre embe stunde hē sealde sume wunde (*Mald* 271)
ever about time he gave some wound
[repeatedly he inflicted some wound]

Here rhyme actually takes the place of alliteration: since the *Maldon* poet otherwise alliterates the cluster *st* with itself (not with *s*), *stunde* is less likely to alliterate with *sume* than to rhyme with *wunde*. As we shall see in 7.3, another late poem known as the *Death of Alfred* depends more heavily on rhyme, relegating alliteration to the background.

Although extended use of rhyme can be found in the epilogue to *Elene* (cf. ll. 1236–50), the *Riming Poem* in the Exeter Book, as the editorial title suggests, shows the most regular use of verse-final rhyme along with alliteration in the Old English poetic corpus. In this verse text, while it usually links the on-verse and the off-verse, rhyme sometimes extends much further. In the following passage, eight half-lines rhyme with each other in succession:

Scrífen scrād glād þurh gescād in brād,
 wæs on lagustrēame lād, þær mē leoðu ne biglād.
 Hæfde ic hēanne hād, ne wæs mē in healle gād,
 þæt þær rōf weord rād. Oft þær rinc gebād

(Rim 13–16)

[The appointed ship sailed widely through a channel, the course was on the sea where the ship did not desert me. I had high rank, (there) was no lack for me in a hall where the brave company of men rode. Often a man experienced there ...]

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

Lehmann and Tabusa (1958) and most recently Hazome (2005) provide convenient alliterative concordances to *Beowulf* where alliterating words are alphabetically ordered with relevant lines cited.

For the treatment of the initial cluster *sc-*, *sp-*, and *st-* in Old English poetry, see Yamanouchi (1986), who examines alliteration on *sc-* in the *Paris Psalter*.

In the lines showing alliterative irregularities, while a majority of scholars and editors attempt to provide emendations, a few scholars (cf. Niles 1994; Kiernan 2004) accept the anomalies, following the manuscript readings.

Russom (1987), following Kuryłowicz (1970), provides an elegant account of possible alliterative patterns in a line/half-line in terms of ‘metrical compounding.’ Suzuki (1996a) also considers the metrical pattern of left dominance to be a reflection of Old English word-stress patterns.

Orchard (1995) demonstrates subtle and sophisticated techniques of ‘ornamental alliteration.’ Le Page (1959) provides instances of transverse (what he calls ‘crossed’) alliteration in *Beowulf* and *Elene* although the list includes some doubtful cases where he assumes weakly stressed words take part in alliteration (e.g., *Beo* 355, 535, 813, 1721, etc.).

The Alliterative Rule of Precedence and Left Dominance are credited to Rieger (1876: 24–5) and Sievers (1893: §23.2). Breaches of these rules have been examined by Stanley (1975), Lucas (1987), and Fujiwara (1990).

Some other interesting aspects of alliteration not dealt with in this chapter are discussed by Cronan, who examines synonymous simplexes with respect to alliterative frequencies, and by Minkova,

who surveys the English alliterative tradition from Old English to late Middle English, with discussion of the peculiarities of initial *sc-/sk-*, *sp-*, *st-* (see Cronan 1986; Minkova 2003).

For the use of rhyme in Old English poetry, Macrae-Gibson (1987: 21–5) and Stanley (1988: 19–38, 53–4) are useful. Sievers (1893: §§ 99–102) also lists possible instances of rhyme in Old English poetry. By comparing rhyme in Old English and Old Saxon, Bredehoft (2005c) argues that rhyme within the half-line must have been part of traditional verse-craft rather than embellishment.

3 Rhythm: The Basics

Overview

In Old English poetry, as we saw in [chapter 1](#), each line is made up of two parts, the on-verse and the off-verse. Each half-line usually contains two primary rhythmic stresses although the number of unstressed syllables in a half-line varies. A word's part of speech helps us to determine whether it bears rhythmic stress. The distribution of rhythmically stressed and unstressed syllables in a half-line is not random but highly regulated to yield the five basic types of verse rhythm. We also look at lengthened modifications of the basic types (known as hypermetric verses).

3.1 Stress-words, Particles, and Proclitics

The first step toward scanning a half-line (analysing its rhythmic pattern) is to determine which words bear rhythmic stress. Of course alliteration is a great help: unless it is accidental or ornamental, alliteration indicates primary rhythmic stress. But as only one alliterating word appears in the off-verse and single alliteration occurs also in the on-verse, it is often necessary to assign rhythmic stress to a word without alliterative guidance. In Old English poetry, we can to a certain extent predict which word bears rhythmic stress with reference to its category or part of speech.

Words in Old English poetry can be classified into three categories with three degrees of rhythmic stress: **STRESS-WORDS**, **PARTICLES**, and **PROCLITICS**.¹ Stress-words are always stressed. They include nouns, adjectives, non-finite verbs (i.e., infinitives and participles), many adverbs, and some 'heavy' pronouns (e.g., *gehwylc* 'each,' *gehwæþer* 'each (of two)'). Proclitics, which appear immediately before a stress-word so as to depend on it, do not normally receive rhythmic stress; they comprise prepositions, demonstratives, possessives, copulative conjunctions (e.g., *ne*, *ond*), and prefixes. Finally, particles lie midway between the other two

categories: although not subordinated to any element, they do not have a fully semantic force and hence usually fail to receive stress. Particles include finite verbs, demonstrative adverbs, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and some conjunctions.

Particles and proclitics can bear rhythmic stress under certain conditions. In verse, particles are normally placed together at the beginning of the clause, either before or after the first stress-word while proclitics stand immediately before the stress-word they depend on. If displaced from these normal positions, particles and proclitics receive rhythmic stress. Compare the following two excerpts from *Beowulf*:

	/	/	/	
þæs wæron	mid	Ēotenum	ecge	cūðe
of-it were	among	the Jutes	edges	known
[The edges of it (=the sword) were known among the Jutes]				

(*Beo* 1145)

sǣlāca gefeah
of-lake-booties rejoiced

/	/		/	/	
mægenbyrðenne	þāra þe	hē him	mid	hæfde	
with-might-load	of-those-which	he him	with	had	
[(he) was happy with his lake-booties, the mighty-burden of those which he had with him]					

(*Beo* 1624b–5)

In the first instance, the root syllables of each stress-word (*Ēotenum* ‘the Jutes,’ *ecge* ‘edges,’ *cūðe* ‘known’) are rhythmically stressed whereas particles (*þæs* ‘of it,’ *wæron* ‘were’) and a proclitic (*mid* ‘among’) are placed in their normal positions without bearing stress. Note also that in the on-verse the first rhythmic stress is suppressed. In the second passage, on the other hand, the preposition *mid* bears rhythmic stress and alliterates because it is postposed after the pronoun (*him*) it depends on. In the relative clause introduced by *þāra þe*, the finite verb (*hæfde* ‘had’) also acquires rhythmic stress since it is separated from the other particles (*þāra þe*, *hē*, *him*) at the beginning of the clause.

Verbal prefixes like *ā-*, *be-*, *for-*, and *ge-* are proclitics closely bound to a stem and do not bear stress. The negative prefix *un-* may occasionally receive rhythmic stress, however:

/ / / /
 sē þe unmurnlice mādmas dælep (Beo 1756)
 who ungrudgingly treasures distributes
 [(another) who ungrudgingly distributes treasures]

/ / / /
 ylða bearnum, undyrne cūð (Beo 150)
 men's to-sons plainly known
 [(it became) plainly known to the sons of men]

In line 1756, *un-* fails to receive rhythmic stress and the line alliterates with /m/ on *-murnlice* and *mādmas*. In line 150, however, the prefix is stressed, taking part in vocalic alliteration with *ylða*.

The metrical status of *un-* is ambiguous in *gold unrīme* / *grimme gecēapod* (Beo 3012). This line can be scanned either with or without stress on *un-*:²

/ / / /
 gold unrīme grimme gecēapod
 gold countless cruelly acquired
 [countless gold, cruelly acquired]
 / / / /
 gold unrīme grimme gecēapod

EXERCISE: Identifying Rhythmic Stress

With the help of alliteration, word-class, or the position of a word, decide which words in the following lines bear rhythmic stress. Mark the rhythmic stress with the stroke (/).

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1) geongum ond ealdum swyle him God sealde
young and old such him God gave
[to young and old (all) such as God gave him] | (Beo 72) |
| 2) sē þe his wordes gewæld wīde hæfde
who his of-word control widely had
[(he) whose word had wide authority] | (Beo 79) |
| 3) ēce drihten, þæs þe hē Ābel slōg
eternal Lord because he Abel slew
[the eternal Lord (avenged the killing) because he slew Abel] | (Beo 108) |
| 4) þā wæs æfter wiste wōp up āhafen
then was after feasting cry up raised
[then after the feasting a cry was raised up] | (Beo 128) |
| 5) mære þeoden mondrēamum from
notorious prince man-joys from
[the notorious prince (turned) from human joys] | (Beo 1715) |

3.2 Syllable and Foot

3.2.1 Syllable Length

As we saw above, rhythmic stress normally falls on stress-words and occasionally on particles and proclitics under certain conditions. The assignment of rhythmic stress is not only subject to word class but also to syllable length. Rhythmic stress normally falls on a LONG (or HEAVY) syllable. A syllable is long if it has a long vowel/diphthong or has a short vowel/diphthong closed by a consonant. For instance, the first syllable of *mō-dor* ‘mother’ ending in a long vowel is long. So is the first syllable of *hear-pe* ‘harp’ ending in a short diphthong closed by a consonant. Note that a single medial consonant belongs to the following syllable while at least one member of a medial consonant cluster belongs to the preceding syllable. All monosyllabic words, which never end in a short vowel except for a few function words, are long (e.g., *sē* ‘sea,’ *sēl* ‘time,’ *frēa* ‘lord,’ *scēat* ‘corner,’ *weorð* ‘becomes’).

In Old English metre, the sequence of two syllables of which the first is SHORT or LIGHT (i.e., ends with a short vowel or diphthong) is often regarded as equivalent to a single long syllable and thus may share rhythmic stress, as in *sci-pe* ‘ship’ below:

tō  fōron	(Beo 1895b)
to ship went	
[(they) went to their ship]	

This phonological equation is called **RESOLUTION** and the two resolved syllables are joined with an arc as above. Resolution may be suspended in certain metrical contexts. In the following half-line, a short syllable alone bears rhythmic stress; short syllables normally bear stress when immediately preceded by another stressed syllable:

/	/	
on bearm scipes		(<i>Beo</i> 35b)
in bosom of-ship		
[in the bosom of the ship]		

★ *U-apocope*

The equation between a long stressed syllable and a sequence of a short stressed syllable and an unstressed syllable is also seen in a phonological rule called *u-apocope* in Old English: the plural suffix *-u*, which is attached to neuter nouns in the nominative and accusative, is deleted if the stem consists of a long syllable, as in *wif* ‘wives’ (<*wifu*) and *word* ‘words’ (<*wordu*) or if it consists of a resolvable sequence, as in *werod* ‘troops’ (<*werodu*).

3.2.2 *Foot*

Now we can tell which word and which syllable of the word is rhythmically stressed in a half-line and which unstressed. The distribution of rhythmically stressed and unstressed syllables in a half-line is not random but highly regulated. To consider the rhythm of a half-line, it is convenient to introduce the notion of **FOOT**, a metrical unit smaller than a half-line but larger than a syllable.

A foot usually has two metrical positions, i.e., the **LIFT** and the **DIP**. A lift is a rhythmically stressed part (marked with a stroke ‘/’), normally consisting of a long stressed syllable or occasionally of a resolvable sequence (i.e., a short stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable). A dip is a rhythmically unstressed part (marked with a cross ‘×’ or crosses ‘× ×,’ ‘× × ×,’ etc.), comprising one or more unstressed syllables. A combination of two feet yields a half-line. The foot boundary is indicated by the vertical stroke ‘|’:

/ × | / ×
 nihtes hwīlum (Beo 3044a)
 of-night every
 FOOT FOOT
 [every night]

× × / | × /
 syðþan flōd ofslōh (Beo 1689b)
 after flood destroyed
 FOOT FOOT
 [after the flood destroyed (the race of giants)]

The first verse consists of two falling feet whereas the second is divided into two rising feet.³

The foot may be made up of one metrical position or a lift alone (e.g., *bearn* 'son') or of three metrical positions consisting of a lift, a **HALF-LIFT** and a dip (e.g., *feoh-giftum* 'costly gift,' *hildē-rinc* 'battle-warrior'). A half-lift, which is marked with a backward stroke '\', most often corresponds to the root syllable of the second compound element but sometimes to the derivative syllable of certain suffixes such as *-ende*, *-en*, *-ra/-est*, *-ig*, *-ing*, *-lice*, *-nes*, *-sum*, and the (historically long) penultimate syllable of Class II weak verbs—thus *murnende* 'mourning,' *sōðlice* 'truly,' and *sceawedon* 'looked at' serve as feet of three metrical positions.

3.3 Five Rhythmic Types

In Old English poetry, since a half-line must have at least four metrical positions, a foot of one metrical position (e.g., *bearn* 'son') always forms a half-line with a foot of three metrical positions (e.g., *Ecgþeowes* 'of Ecgtheow,' *Ecglāfes* 'of Ecglaf') but not with a foot of less than two metrical positions (e.g., *ylða* 'of men,' *gōd* 'good'):

/ | / \ ×
 bearn Ecgþeowes (Beo 529b)
 son Ecgtheow's
 [the son of Ecgtheow]

/ \ × | /
 Ecglāfes bearn (Beo 499b)
 Ecglaf's son
 [the son of Ecglaf]

/ | / ×
 *bearn ylda
 son men's
 [the son of men]

/ × | /
 *ylda bearn
 [men's son]

/ | /
 *gōd bearn
 good son
 [a good son]

/ | /
 *bearn gōd
 son good

EXERCISE: Patronymics

In Old English poetry, people of importance are often referred to as 'son of someone or of some tribe,' such as *bearn Ecgþeowes* 'son of Ecgtheow, i.e., Beowulf' (529b, etc.), *sunu Ecgþeowes* 'son of Ecgtheow' (1550b, etc.), *maga Ecgþeowes* 'son of Ecgtheow' (2587b). Below is a list of names of people or tribes in *Beowulf*. (For your convenience, the genitive form is given as well.) Do they form a half-line with words for 'son,' such as *bearn*, *eafera*, *maga*, *mago*, or *sunu*? Note that *maga*, *mago*, and *sunu*, being resolved, are metrically monosyllabic while *eafera* undergoes resolution to fill two metrical positions. If you think certain foot combinations are metrically acceptable or unacceptable, then look up Bessinger's *Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* to see whether the phrases are in fact attested or unattested in the epic.

Ecglāf (gen. Ecglāfes)

Healfdene (gen. Healfdenes)

Scyld (gen. Scyldes)

Wæls (gen. Wælses)

Wihstān (gen. Wihstānes)

According to Eduard Sievers, the combination of the two feet of various rhythmic patterns yields the following five basic types of half-lines in Old English poetry, which are commonly labelled as Types A, B, C, D, and E. Types A, B, and C have two feet of equal metrical length whereas Types D and E combine a short foot with a long one. In Type D there are two variations, one with the half-lift immediately following the lift in the second foot (D1) and the other with the half-lift at the end of the second foot (D2).⁴

Type A: lift, dip | lift, dip

Type B: dip, lift | dip, lift

Type C: dip, lift | lift, dip

Type D: lift | lift, half-lift, dip (D1)

lift | lift, dip, half-lift (D2)

Type E: lift, half-lift, dip | lift

Among the five types, Type A is most commonly attested in Old English poetry, followed by Types B, C, D, and E in descending order of frequency. Although each type occurs either in the on-verse or in the off-verse with a variety of combinations, there is a general tendency that Types B and C are common in the off-verse and that different types are combined to form a line. In what follows, each of the basic five types are illustrated in detail by instances primarily taken from *Beowulf*, with which the reader might be familiar. Our illustration is primarily based on Sievers's classical works with some modifications.⁵

Type A: lift, dip | *lift, dip*

A half-line of Type A consists of falling rhythm (lift, dip):

/ × | / ×
bēagas dælde
rings distributed
[(he) distributed rings]

(*Beo* 80b)

The first dip may comprise more than one unstressed syllable,

most often two, occasionally three, rarely four or five:

/ x x | / x
wēox under wolcnum (Beo 8a)
flourished under skies
[(he) flourished under the skies]

/ x x x | / x
ealle būton ānum (Beo 705a)
all but one
[all except one]

/ x x x x | / x
rædde on ðone rōfan (Beo 2690a)
rushed on the renowned-one
[(the dragon) rushed upon the renowned man]

Note, on the other hand, that the final dip never has more than one syllable. This is also the case with Types C and D1 to be discussed below.

Either the first or the second lift (or both) may fall on the resolved sequence of a short stressed syllable and an unstressed syllable:

/ x | / x
sceaþena þrætum (Beo 4b)
enemies' from-troops
[from troops of enemies]

/ x x | / x
māþðum for metode (Beo 169a)

treasure for God

[(he was not allowed to approach) the treasure because of God]

/ x x | / x
hæleð under heofenum (Beo 52a)
men under heavens
[men under the heavens]

Consider the following half-lines that consist solely of a compound or a derivative. A hyphen is inserted between elements:

/ x | / x
hilde-wæpnum (Beo 39a)
[(with) battle-weapons]

/ x | / x
 ēadig-lice
 [happily]

(Beo 100a)

As there is no single foot of four metrical positions in Sievers's theory, these half-lines are divided into two falling feet (i.e., *hilde*^x - and -*wæpnum*^x; *ēadig*^x - and -*lice*^x) where the root syllables of the second compound element (-*wæpnum*) and of the derivative suffix (-*lice*) bear primary rhythmic stress.

In certain verses of Type A, a half-lift occurs in the position of a dip in either foot or in both. In verse 629a, which has a half-lift in the first foot, the lift in the second foot is short:

/ \ | / x
 wælreow wiga
 deadly-fierce warrior
 [the warrior fierce in battle]

(Beo 629a)

/ x | / \
 Grendles gūðcraft
 Grendel's war-craft
 [Grendel's war-strength]

(Beo 127a)

/ \ | / \
 brēosthord blōðrēow
 breast-hoard blood-fierce
 [the breast-hoard (grew) blood-thirsty]

(Beo 1719a)

This variety of Type A is commonly labelled Type A2 so as to distinguish it from the basic type labelled Type A1. Because of their metrical heaviness, half-lines of Type A2 normally show double alliteration and are accordingly restricted to the on-verse.

In Type A, the first lift can be suppressed so that alliteration falls only on the second lift:

x x | / x
 Eow hēt secgan
 you ordered say
 [(He) ordered (me) to tell you]

(Beo 391a)

x x x | / x
 Ða wæs on burgum
 then was in strongholds
 [Then was in the strongholds]

(Beo 53a)

This type of half-line is labelled A3. In Type A3, the number of unstressed syllables before the second lift is at least two, often exceeding three as if to compensate for the absence of lift. (Verses with only one [primary] lift are sometimes called **LIGHT VERSES**, and those with two lifts and those with two lifts and a half-lift **NORMAL VERSES** and **HEAVY VERSES** respectively.) As alliteration occurs only in the lift of its second foot, Type A3 is naturally restricted to the on-verse. In addition, A3 half-lines very often come at the beginning of clauses or sentences (see 6.5.3).⁶

Two Lifts or One Lift?

As he requires a half-line to have two lifts, Sievers regards the pronoun *hi* 'they' as forming a lift in the on-verse below:

$\begin{array}{ccc} / & & / \\ \text{Ht hyne } \bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{a}} \text{ æt } \bar{\text{æ}}\text{ron} & \text{tō } \bar{\text{br}}\text{imes } \bar{\text{f}}\bar{\text{a}}\text{roðe} & \text{(Beo 28)} \\ \text{they him then carried} & \text{to of-sea current} & \\ \text{[They then carried him to the current of the sea]} & & \end{array}$

Since non-alliterating first lifts usually consist of weakly stressed elements like *hi*, a majority of scholars today prefer the idea that on-verses like 28a contain only a single lift with the first lift suppressed. Pope (1966), who attempts to account for Old English metre in terms of musical notations, assumes that in Type A3 the harp was struck in place of the suppressed initial lift.

Type B: dip, lift | dip, lift

In Type B, a half-line reiterates the rising rhythm (dip, lift):

$\begin{array}{ccc} \times & & / \times / \\ \text{ond Halga } \bar{\text{t}}\bar{\text{il}} & & \text{(Beo 61b)} \\ \text{and Halga } \text{good} & & \\ \text{[and good Halga]} & & \end{array}$

Either the first or the second lift falls on a resolvable sequence. Only rarely are both lifts resolved:

$\begin{array}{ccc} \times & & / \times / \\ \text{ond } \bar{\text{h}}\bar{\text{æ}}\bar{\text{le}}\bar{\text{p}}\bar{\text{a}} \text{ bearn} & & \text{(Beo 1189b)} \\ \text{and heroes' sons} & & \\ \text{[and the sons of heroes]} & & \end{array}$

$\times \quad / \mid \times \quad /$
 þurh rūmne sefan
 through roomy mind
 [through a generous mind]

(Beo 278a)

$\times \quad \times \quad / \mid \times \quad /$
 under heofenes hæðor
 under of-heaven vault
 [under the vault of the heaven]

(Beo 414a)

While the first dip can have a flexible number of unstressed syllables, the second dip normally contains one or two:

$\times \quad \times \quad \times \quad \times \quad / \mid \times \quad /$
 swylce hīe æt Finnes hām
 such they at Finn's home
 [such as they (could find) in Finn's home]

(Beo 1156a)

$\times \quad \times \quad \times \quad \times \times / \mid \times \quad \times \quad /$
 syððan hē hire folmum æthrān
 since he her with-hands touched
 [after he touched it (=the door) with his hands]

(Beo 722b)

Type C: dip, lift | lift, dip

A half-line of Type C consists of two different rhythms, rising and falling, which result in a clashing of two lifts. As in Type B, the verse-initial dip can contain a varying number of unstressed syllables whereas as in Types A and D1, the verse-final dip never contains more than one unstressed syllable:

$\times \quad / \mid / \times$
 gebūn hæfdon
 occupied had
 [(they) had occupied (the hall)]

(Beo 117b)

$\times \quad \times \quad / \mid / \times$
 þonne wīg cume
 when war come
 [when war comes]

(Beo 23b)

In this type, resolution is usually found in the first lift, and only rarely in the second or in both:

$\times \quad \times \quad / \mid / \times$
 ond tō fæder fæþmum
 and to father's embraces
 [in the embraces of the Father]

(Beo 188a)

$\times \times \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times$
 Hē on weg losade (Beo 2096b)
 he on way escaped
 [He escaped away]

$\times \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times$
 tō scypon feredon (Beo 1154b)
 to ships carried
 [(they) carried (all the goods) to (their) ships]

In Type C, a short syllable often occupies the second lift, which is immediately preceded by the first lift:

$\times \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times$
 in geārdagum (Beo 1b)
 in yore-days
 [in days of yore]

As this instance shows, the second lift of Type C often corresponds to the secondary word-stress of a second compound element. Likewise, the ‘secondary’ word-stress of important derivative and formative syllables bears the second lift of Type C:

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times$
 ond gefræt Wade (Beo 96a)₇
 and adorned
 [and (He) adorned (the corners of the earth)]

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times$
 tō gefremmanne (Beo 174b)
 to do
 [to do]

Type D: lift | lift, half-lift, dip (D1)

lift | lift, dip, half-lift (D2)

As is noticeable from the instances below, the second foot of Types D1 and D2 (especially the former) often consists of a single word, either a compound or a word with a formative or derivative syllable:

$/ \quad | \quad / \quad \backslash \quad \times$
 D1: frēan Scyldinga (Beo 500b)
 lord Scyldings’
 [the lord of the Scyldings]

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \times \backslash$
 D2: wēold wīdeferhð (*Beo* 702a)
 ruled for-a-long-time
 [(He) has ever ruled (mankind)]

While the verse-final dip of D1 does not consist of more than one unstressed syllable, the non-verse-final dip of D2 may contain two unstressed syllables:

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times \times \backslash$
 sēon sibbegedriht (*Beo* 387a)
 see related-band
 [(summon) a band of kinsman to see (me)]

In Types D1 and D2, either the first or the second lift (or rarely both) may be resolved:

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \backslash \times$
 sele Hrōðgāres (*Beo* 826b) D1
 hall Hrothgar's
 [the hall of Hrothgar]

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \backslash \times$
 heall heorudrēore (*Beo* 487a) D1
 hall with-sword-gore
 [the hall (drenched) with sword-gore]

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \backslash \times$
 hlāden herewædum (*Beo* 1897a) D1
 loaded with-battle-garments
 [loaded with battle-garments]

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times \backslash$
 micel morgenswæg (*Beo* 129a) D2
 great morning-cry
 [a great morning-cry]

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times \backslash$
 wlanc Wēdera lēod (*Beo* 341a) D2
 brave Weder-Geats' lord
 [the brave lord of the Weder-Geats]

$\quad \quad \quad / \quad | \quad / \quad \times \backslash$
 cyning æþelum gōd (*Beo* 1870b) D2₈
 king with-nobilities good
 [the excellent king with noble lineages]

In Type D1, the half-lift may consist of a short syllable alone

since it immediately follows the second lift. (Resolution tends to be avoided in the half-lift of Types D1, D2, and E.) Likewise, as it is next to the first lift, a short second lift may occur:

/ | / \ ×
 scearp scyldwiga (Beo 288a)
 shrewd shield-warrior
 [the shrewd shield-warrior]

/ | / \ ×
 þeodcyninga (Beo 2a)
 [of the people's kings]

Types D1 and D2 may be 'expanded' with one (or, rarely, more than one) unstressed syllable after the first lift. An asterisk added to the letter 'D' indicates a half-line of this subtype:

/ × | / \ ×
 side sænæssas (Beo 223a) D*1
 wide sea-capes
 [wide headlands]

/ × | / × \
 lēoda landgeweorc (Beo 938a) D*2
 people's stronghold
 [the stronghold of the people]

These expanded Type D half-lines require double alliteration because of their metrical heaviness.

Type E: *lift, half-lift, dip | lift*

This type is, as it were, a mirror image of Type D2, often comprising a three-syllable compound or a three-syllable word with derivatives/formatives in the first foot:

/ \ × | /
 healærna mæst (Beo 78a)
 of-hall-buildings greatest
 [the greatest of hall-buildings]

/ \ × | /
 murnende mōd (Beo 50a)
 mourning mood
 [(their) mind (was) mourning]

The first or the second lift (or rarely both) may be resolved:

$\begin{array}{c} / \quad \backslash \quad \times \quad | \quad / \\ \text{w} \text{li} \text{te} \text{beorhtne} \quad \text{w} \text{ang} \\ \text{beautiful} \quad \text{plain} \\ \text{[a beautiful plain]} \end{array}$
(Beo 93a)

$\begin{array}{c} / \quad \backslash \quad \times \quad | \quad / \\ \text{w} \text{yrmcynn} \text{es} \quad \text{f} \text{ela} \\ \text{of-serpent-race} \quad \text{many} \\ \text{[many of a race of serpents]} \end{array}$
(Beo 1425b)

$\begin{array}{c} / \quad \backslash \quad \times \quad | \quad / \\ \text{n} \text{icorh} \text{ū} \text{sa} \quad \text{f} \text{ela} \\ \text{of-water-monsters' abodes} \quad \text{many} \\ \text{[many of water-monsters' abodes]} \end{array}$
(Beo 1411b)

The dip normally consists of a single unstressed syllable but occasionally of two unstressed syllables:

$\begin{array}{c} / \quad \backslash \quad \times \quad \times \quad | \quad / \\ \text{w} \text{īn} \text{ærnes} \quad \text{g} \text{eweald} \\ \text{of-wine-hall} \quad \text{control} \\ \text{[power over the wine-hall]} \end{array}$
(Beo 654a)

Certain half-lines may be ambiguous between Types D and E when they consist of three different rhythmically stressable words.⁹ Consider the half-line below:

$\begin{array}{c} \text{Fyrst} \quad \text{forð} \quad \text{g} \text{ewāt} \\ \text{time} \quad \text{forth} \quad \text{went} \\ \text{[Time went forth]} \end{array}$
(Beo 210a)

This half-line could be analysed as Type D2 with the lift on *fyrst* ‘time’ and *forð* ‘forth’ or Type E with the lift on *fyrst* and - *wāt* ‘went.’ In verse 210a, however, the occurrence of double alliteration between *fyrst* and *forð* lends support to the former analysis. If there is only a single alliteration, the syntax and semantics of the half-line might afford a clue:

$\begin{array}{c} \text{st} \text{īg} \quad \text{under} \quad \text{l} \text{æg} \\ \text{path} \quad \text{under} \quad \text{lay} \\ \text{[beneath lay a path]} \end{array}$
(Beo 2213b)

$\begin{array}{c} \text{gomel} \quad \text{swyrd} \quad \text{get} \text{ēah} \\ \text{ancient} \quad \text{sword} \quad \text{drew} \\ \text{[(he) drew an ancient sword]} \end{array}$
(Beo 2610b)

Verse 2213b is more likely to be of Type D2 since the verb *læg* ‘lay’ and its adverbial modifier *under* ‘under’ have a closer syntactic tie than the noun *stig* ‘path’ and the adverb do. It is, on the other hand, advisable to make a Type E analysis of verse 2610b, in which the adjective *gomel* and the noun *swyrd* form a single constituent. There are, however, certain controversial cases where alliteration and syntax are in discord. In the verse below from the *Wanderer*, while alliteration points to the Type D*2 analysis, the genitive modifier *hrūsan* and the head noun *heolstre* are syntactically more closely tied—thus leading to Type E scansion:¹⁰

hrūsan heolstre biwrah (Wan 23a)
 of-earth in-darkness buried
 [(I) buried (my lord) in the darkness of the earth]

EXERCISE: Identifying Rhythmic Types

Scan the first eleven lines (i.e., twenty-two half-lines) of *Beowulf* and identify which rhythmic types they belong to. You might find it helpful to use ‘Some Tips for Scanning Half-lines, with Sample Scansions’ in [Appendix B](#).

3.4 Anacrusis

In the verses of Types A and D, there occasionally appear one or two extrametrical unstressed syllables preceding the initial lift, which are called ANACRUSIS:

× | / × | / ×
 in Cāines cynne (Beo 107a)
 in Cain’s race
 [as Cain’s race]

× | / | / \ ×
 gesægð sōðlice (Beo 141a)
 said soothly
 [(it was) truly told]

× × | / × × | / ×
 gē at hām gē on herge (Beo 1248a)
 both at home and on army
 [both at home and on campaign]

Unstressed prefixes most commonly occur in a position of anacrusis but other linguistic elements (e.g., prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, some adverbs, pronouns) can also form anacrusis.

In half-lines with anacrusis, the two lifts tend to alliterate, and most examples are accordingly restricted to the on-verse. In late poems like the *Battle of Maldon*, however, Type A with anacrusis often occurs in the off-verse with a single alliteration.¹¹

Although it begins with a lift, a Type E verse normally does not allow anacrusis.¹² Why is anacrusis attested in Types A and D but not in Type E? A clue can be found in the position of the syntactic break within a verse, which shows an interesting correlation with the occurrence of anacrusis.¹³ (Note that the syntactic break in a verse does not necessarily correspond to the boundary between two feet.) Anacrusis is common in Type A when the break occurs toward the beginning of the verse (the double vertical strokes ‘||’ stand for the syntactic boundary):

x / x x / x	
gewēold his gewitte	(Beo 2703a)
controlled his intellect	
[(he) controlled his senses]	
x / x x / x	
in mægþa gehwære	(Beo 25a)
in of-nations any	
[in any of nations]	

Notice that without anacrusis the two syntactic groups are not equal in size: the first one (i.e., -wēold and mægþa) is shorter than the second (i.e., his gewitte and gehwære respectively). On the other hand, anacrusis is very rare in *Beowulf* when the two groups are of equal length. It follows that the use of anacrusis helps to compensate for the relative metrical brevity of the first syntactic group and thereby to maintain balance between the two groups. This provides an explanation of why anacrusis appears in Type D, which has the shorter first foot or group, but not in Type E: in the latter, the longer first foot or group removes the necessity of adding anacrusis before it.

3.5 Hypermetric Verses

In Old English poetry, there occur HYPERMETRIC VERSES containing more than two feet and four metrical positions, as below:

/ x x | / x | / x
 gān under gyldnum bēage (Beo 1163a)
 walk under golden circlet
 [(she came forth) walking with a golden circlet worn]

In *Beowulf*, there occur twenty-three hypermetric verses including this instance, most of which appear in sequence. Verse 1163a above is the beginning of a sequential cluster continuing up to 1168b. Two other clusters are attested in 1705a–7b and 2995a–6b, while there are two apparent instances of a hypermetric verse in isolation (e.g., 2173a and 2297a). Extended verses of this type are much more frequently found in the *Dream of the Rood*, *Judith*, and so-called gnomic poems.

When they occur in the on-verse, hypermetric verses have a normal two-foot verse (most frequently of Type A) preceded by an additional falling foot, as in the instance given above. The lift of the extra foot normally participates in alliteration. Hypermetric off-verses are, on the other hand, normally formed by adding a relatively long sequence of unstressed syllables to a normal two-foot verse (usually of Type A):

x x x x x | / x | / x
 gehwylc hiora his ferhþe trēowde (Beo 1166b)
 each of-them his spirit trusted
 [each of them trusted his spirit]

Hypermetric verses are closely tied to speech, being often attested in a group before a speech, within a speech, and in between speeches. They may also occur at the beginning of a poem (e.g., *Max I* 1–6; *Max II* 1–4) or at the end (e.g., *Jud* 337–49; *Wan* 111–15). The use of hypermetric verses might give particular solemnity or importance to the passages or achieve the effect of slowing down the narrative movement, but the exact functions of hypermetricity still remain to be explained.

EXERCISE: Hypermetric Verses

Scan the following hypermetric verses, which occur in

clusters in the *Dream of the Rood*. Read *blēom* ‘colour’ (dat.pl.) in 22a expanded as disyllabic, i.e., *blēo-um*:

swætan on þa swiðran healfe. Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed,
forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe. Geseah ic þæt fise beacen
wenden wædum ond blēom; hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed,
beswyled mid swates gange, hwilum mid since gegyrwed. (*Dream* 20–3)

[(The cross began) to bleed on the right side. I was all troubled with sorrows, I was afraid because of the fair sight. I saw the shining sign change in garments and colours; now it was made wet with moisture, drenched with the flow of blood, now adorned with treasure.]

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

While the metrical analysis presented in this chapter is primarily based on the Sievers-Bliss system, there has been another competing theory initiated by Heusler (1925, 1943), and continued in the work of Pope (1966), Creed (1966, 1982, 1990), Nist (1967), and Hieatt (1972), among others. Obst (1987) departs more radically from Sievers, proposing four basic types, which allows many verses of three feet. For the alternative analyses of Sievers’s Types B and C, see 4.3.

Stress-words, Particles, and Proclitics: The classification of words in verse according to stressability is based on Kuhn (1933). A critical summary of his classification can be found in Momma (1997: chapter 3). For the post-positioning of prepositions in Old English poetry, see Lapidge (2006).

Foot: Although some scholars (e.g., Hutcheson 1995) find the notion of foot unnecessary, I retain it as a convenient term. There is no agreement about the boundary of the foot; some metrists think that the boundary should not be drawn within a word (see Bliss 1967). Bliss replaces foot by ‘breath-group,’ which roughly corresponds to syntactic grouping.

Basic Rhythmic Types: For the five types, see Sievers (1885, 1893). Although English translations of these works in German have not been available, there are convenient summaries of Sievers’s types and subtypes in Cassidy and Ringler (1971).

Anacrusis: The relationship between the occurrence of

anacrusis and the position of a syntactic break is discussed in detail by Bliss (1967: §§ 46–50). For criticism of Bliss's constraint on anacrusis, see Hutcheson (1995: chapter 4, esp. p. 107, n. 33). For the treatment of exceptional occurrences of off-verses with anacrusis in *Beowulf*, see Donoghue (1987a) and Suzuki (1995c: 159–63).

Hypermetric Verses: For hypermetric verses, see Timmer (1952), Pope (1966), Hieatt (1969, 1974, 1980), Bliss (1972), Zehnder (2000), and Ogura (2009).

4 Rhythm: Advanced Topics

Overview

In the previous chapter, we saw that the rhythm of Old English poetry is highly systematic, yielding the five basic types. We begin with the ‘Four-syllable Principle,’ which each half-line must follow to fit into any of the legitimate types. There are apparently a number of verses which seem not to suit any of Sievers’s five types or to observe a proper syllable count. Most of these apparent exceptions can, however, be accommodated to normal verses by reference to the phonological processes of contraction, parasiting, syncope, and resolution, each of which may add or subtract a syllable. While the metrical analysis in [chapters 3 and 4](#) is primarily based on the Sievers-Bliss system, we will also look at another competing theory with special reference to alternative analyses of Types B and C. This chapter concludes by exploring the interaction between rhythm and alliteration in Old English poetry.

4.1 The Four-syllable Principle

In Old English poetry, most half-lines can be rhythmically classified as Type A, B, C, D, or E. In order for a half-line to fit any of the acceptable types, there is a rudimentary requirement that each half-line must satisfy. As each of the four metrical positions in a half-line is occupied by at least one (stressed or unstressed) syllable, a normal half-line must consist of four syllables at a minimum (see [1.3](#)). In *Beowulf* and other Old English verse texts, however, there occasionally do occur half-lines of three syllables, as illustrated below:¹

hēan hūses (*Beo* 116a)
[the high house]

dēapwīc sēon (*Beo* 1275b)
[to see a death-place]

A closer look at these half-lines will reveal that they are only

apparent exceptions: when the poem was originally composed, *hēan* and *sēon* were assumed to be **UNCONTRACTED** or disyllabic (i.e., *hēahan*, *sēohan*) so that each of the half-lines consisted of four syllables to give normal verses of four metrical positions. In editions of Old English poetry, forms that need to be read as disyllabic for metrical reasons are often marked with a circumflex diacritic, as *hēān*, *sēōn*, for example.

In addition to these metrically adjustable half-lines, there appear to be some genuine exceptions where emendations have often been called for. In the *Beowulf* manuscript, the hero is referred to as *secg betsta* and *ðegn betstan*, each epithet in itself forming a half-line:

secg betsta (Beo 947a, 1759a)
[the best man]

ðegn betstan (Beo 1871b)
[the best thane]

As both half-lines are short of one syllable, it has been proposed that the genitive plural ending *-a* should be added to *secg* and *ðegn* to give four-syllable half-lines of Type A:²

/ × / ×
secg[a] betsta
[the best of men]
/ × / ×
ðegn[a] betstan
[the best of thanes]

Other scholars recover the mid-vowel in the superlative *betsta(n)* to make metrically acceptable verses of Type D1 (cf. *betost* in *Beo* 3007).³ The initial syllable of *bet[e]sta(n)*, although short, can bear rhythmic stress alone as it is immediately preceded by another rhythmic stress:

/ / \ ×
secg bet[e]sta
/ / \ ×
ðegn bet[e]stan

★ Textual Conservatism

Due to the trend of textual conservatism, most of the recent *Beowulf* editors, being reluctant to emend solely for metrical reasons, follow the manuscript readings in the half-lines above. On the other hand, editors of *Beowulf* in general seem to be more ready to emend non-alliterating half-lines even if there are neither grammatical nor semantic anomalies. In [chapter 6](#), we see in more detail how skilfully Old English poets avoid half-lines of three or fewer syllables by means of grammatical devices, suggesting that in Old English poetry the number of syllables in a half-line is as significant as alliteration.

EXERCISE: Half-lines of Three or Fewer Syllables

Consult several editions of *Beowulf* and examine how they deal with the following half-lines of three or fewer syllables in the manuscript. Note that in verse 2139a *sele* (resolved) is metrically monosyllabic:

gegnum fōr [(she) went straight]	(<i>Beo</i> 1404b)
in ðām sele [in the hall]	(<i>Beo</i> 2139a)
hrēas blāc [(he) fell pale]	(<i>Beo</i> 2488a)

4.2 Accommodation of Apparently Ill-formed Half-lines

In Old English poetry, there are quite a few half-lines that do not fit any of the basic rhythmic types and their subtypes. The majority of these verses are, however, metrically adjustable, as in the cases of *hēan hūses* (*Beo* 116a) and *dēaþwīc sēon* (*Beo* 1275b) discussed in [4.1](#). In what follows, we see how apparently ill-formed half-lines can be metrically accommodated by reference to contraction, parasiting, syncopation, and resolution. Note that these phonological processes are not invoked in some after-the-fact manner to justify metrical patterns but that they are all well-established processes from other contexts.

4.2.1 Contraction

To begin with, let us look at another instance in *Beowulf* where the uncontracted form is metrically called for:

^x ^x ^x ^x / /
 þeah ðe hē geong sý (Beo 1831b)
 [though he may be young]

This half-line ending with two successive lifts does not properly conform to any of the rhythmic types. Metrical irregularity will, however, be removed if versification is based on the disyllabic form of the subjunctive present verb (i.e., *sī + e*), which gives a Type C half-line:

× × × / /×
 þēah ðe hē **g**eong sīe

Besides the uncontracted forms, the *Beowulf* poet also uses the contracted or monosyllabic forms, which would have been closer to his own usage:

$\begin{matrix} / & \backslash & \times & / \\ \text{nī} & \text{ð} & \text{wun} & \text{dōr} & \text{sēon} \end{matrix}$
(Beo 1365b)
 [(one can) see a fearful wonder]

In this half-line, *sēon* must be monosyllabic since the disyllabic reading would give a verse of unknown type such as

*nīd^gwundor^g sēon^g: no verse of Type E is allowed to end with an unstressed syllable, nor is this hypothetical verse an attested variety of Type A2. Thus, the *Beowulf* poet might have had the two variants at his disposal, skilfully choosing between archaic (uncontracted) and later (contracted) forms according to metrical needs.

4.2.2 Parasiting

While restoring uncontracted forms adds a syllable to keep four positions in a half-line, there are also metrical devices in Old English poetry to discard a syllable for metrical adjustment. Consider the following half-lines, which fail to fall under Type E where neither the first nor the second lift is followed by an unstressed syllable:

/ x \ x /
 wundordēaðe swealt (Beo 3037b)
 [(he) died by a wondrous death]

/ \ x / x
 sincmāðpum sēlra (Beo 2193a)
 [a better treasure]

A clue to scansion of these verses is the fact that both the words *wundor* and *māðpum* were historically monosyllabic: a vowel before a liquid or a nasal was PARASITIC or EPENTHETIC, as the corresponding cognates in other Germanic languages indicate (cf. ON *undr* and Go *maipms*); in the course of Old English, a word-final liquid or nasal became syllabic and a parasitic vowel was inserted. If we assume that earlier nonparasiting *wundr* and *māðpm* were the forms originally intended by the poet, the half-lines above conform perfectly to Type E and Type A2, respectively. Editors of Old English texts often underdot a vowel to be ignored on metrical grounds, as in Klaeber's editions:

/ \ x /
 wundordēaðe swealt
 / \ / x
 sincmāðpum sēlra

As in the case of contraction, the *Beowulf* poet resorts to the later (parasiting) forms as well as the archaic (non-parasiting) forms. Consider the following half-line:

/ x / x
 symbel picgan (Beo 1010b)
 [(he would) partake of the feast]

In verse 1010b, *symbel* must be scanned with the disyllabic parasiting form in order for the half-line to observe the Four-syllable Principle.

4.2.3 Syncopation

Both half-lines below are metrically anomalous because the final dip of Types A and C never consists of more than two unstressed syllables (cf. 3.3):

/ x x x / x x
 meltan mid þām mōdigan (Beo 3011a)
 [(Not just a part of the hoard shall) melt away with the brave one]

x x x / / x x
 Ne seah ic elpēodige (Beo 336b)
 [I have not seen (so many) foreign (men)]

In Old English poetry, however, a short medial unstressed vowel can be ignored in scansion: such vowels, which were SYNCOPATED in the poem as originally composed, have been restored by the scribes in analogy with nominative forms like *mōdig* and *elpēodig*. The vowels subject to syncopation include short medial vowels in open syllables after long stem syllables (e.g., *dōgres* < *dōgo-res*), short medial vowels in open syllables after short stem syllables (e.g., *micle* < *mice-le*), and short vowels in closed syllables after short stem syllables (e.g., *fīrn* < *fī-ren*; *ofst* < *o-fost*).

Thus, although the short medial *-i-* in *mōdigan* and *elpēodige* appears in the manuscript, it must be ignored in scansion so that the half-lines above can conform to the regular pattern of Types A and C. (A dot below a vowel again signifies that the vowel is to be metrically ignored.)

/ x x x / x
 meltan mid þām mōdigan
 x x x / / x
 Ne seah ic elpēodige

EXERCISE: Contraction, Parasiting, and Syncopation

Scan the following half-lines from *Beowulf* by adjusting the syllable count with reference to contraction, parasiting, or syncopation:

1) <i>man geþeon</i> [a man (will) prosper]	(Beo 25b)
2) <i>cwæð þæt se ælmihtiga</i> [(he) said that the Almighty (made the earth)]	(Beo 92a)
3) <i>oþres dögores</i> [on the following day]	(Beo 219b)
4) <i>wælfagne winter</i> [through the slaughter-stained winter]	(Beo 1128a)
5) <i>morþorbed stræd</i> [a bed of violent death (was) spread]	(Beo 2436b)

4.2.4 Resolution and Kaluza's Law

Like contraction, parasiting, and syncopation, resolution can adjust the number of syllables to fit half-lines into acceptable rhythmic patterns. In the instance below, resolution must be suspended because the half-line would be too short a verse of only three

metrical positions with *-locan* resolved **bāt bānlocan*:

/ / \ ×
bāt bānlocan (Beo 742a)
[(the monster) bit into the joints]

On the other hand, resolution must apply to the following half-line, which would not belong to any metrically acceptable type

with *-wine* unresolved (**frēowine[×] folcā[×]*):

/ \ / ×
frēowine folca (Beo 430a)
[noble friend of people]

As already mentioned (see 3.2.1), resolution may be suspended when a short stressed syllable is immediately preceded by another (primary or secondary) stressed syllable. In verse 430a of Type A2, however, resolution must take place even though the short stressed syllable *-wi(ne)* occurs immediately after the stressed syllable *frēo-*.

Why is resolution suspended in verse 742a but not in verse 430a although each of the resolvable sequences is immediately preceded by a lift? A clue for solving this discrepancy lies in the metrical nature of the resolvable sequence itself. The application of resolution depends not only on the existence of the stress

immediately before a short syllable but also on the metrical structure of the resolvable sequence. If a resolvable sequence ends with a long unstressed syllable, resolution does not take place: in verse 742a, the syllable after the short stressed syllable (i.e., *-can* of *locan*) ends with a consonant, and is thus long.⁴ On the other hand, if the second syllable of the resolved sequence is short, resolution takes place: in verse 430a the syllable *-ne* of *wine* ends with a short vowel, and is thus short. The applicability of resolution according to the nature of the resolvable sequence is known as KALUZA'S LAW. This law, however, allows exceptions in Type B where the resolved second lift very often bears a long

ending (*þurh rūmne sefan* 'from a generous mind' *Beo* 278a) and in Type C where the unresolved second lift often bears a short

ending (*þæt hīe in beorsele* 'that they (would) await a battle) in the beer-hall' *Beo* 482a). Accordingly, in *Beowulf*, Kaluza's Law is observed in limited verse types like A2 and D1 (cf. *Beo* 430a and 742a above) where a resolvable sequence on the second compound element is immediately preceded by a lift and both are in the same foot. The law is, however, generally abandoned by other Old English poets (see 'References and Suggestions for Further Reading' in [chapter 7](#)).

4.3 Types B and C Reconsidered

Consider now the following half-lines of Types B and C:

$\times \times \quad / \mid \times /$ Hūru Gēata lēod [Indeed the prince of the Geats]	(<i>Beo</i> 669a)
--	--------------------

$\times \times \quad / \mid / \times$ sē wæs moncynnes [he was (the strongest) of mankind]	(<i>Beo</i> 196b)
--	--------------------

Some scholars reject the rising foot in Types B and C since Old English words normally take word-initial stress (except for prefixed words).⁵ In addition, the Type B and C analyses above result in drawing the foot boundaries in a way which does not correspond to syntactic or semantic groupings but often occurs in the middle of a word or a compound (e.g., *Gēat* | *-a*; *mon* | *-cynnes*). In order to avoid the rising foot and achieve a

linguistically more natural grouping, an alternative analysis has been suggested where the foot boundary is placed before a noun phrase or a compound:

|
Hūru Gēata lēod

|
sē wæs moncynnes

As the first foot contains no lift, suppression of the initial lift should be assumed in the verses, as in the case of Type A3. Interesting to note here is that the half-lines above resemble the following half-lines of Type D except that the first foot has no lift:

/ x | / x \
grētte Gēata lēod (Beo 625a) D*2
[(she) greeted the prince of the Geats]

/ | / \ x
fēond mancynnes (Beo 164b) D1
[the enemy of mankind]

Like these Type D half-lines, verses 669a and 196b would have the second foot where the rhythmic stress on *lēod* and *-cyn(nes)* becomes subordinate to the preceding lift so as to be demoted to the half-lift:

x x | / x \
Hūru Gēata lēod
x x | / \ x
sē wæs moncynnes

It follows that these two half-lines are to be analysed as subtypes of D2 and D1, which, like A3, are light verses with the initial lift suppressed.

The reanalysis of Types B and C as subtypes of Type D, although appealing, is not without difficulties. Although the new theory analyses the rearranged second foot in Types B and C as analogous to the second foot in Types D2 and D1, Type D usually has compounds in the second foot whereas Types B and C more

often have word groups. Furthermore, the following half-lines of Types B and C with double alliteration are more likely to assume two primary rhythmic stresses than one primary stress with the second demoted to a half-lift:

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \quad /$
 þenden wordum wēold (*Beo* 30a)
 [while (he) controlled with words]

$\times \quad / \quad / \times$
 Oft Scyld Scefing (*Beo* 4a)
 [Often Scyld Scefing]

Since the analysis of Types B and C is controversial, I use the well-established terms ‘Type B’ and ‘Type C’ impartially, leaving open the question of foot division. Hereafter I do not mark foot boundaries unless the topic requires them.

4.4 Interaction between Rhythm and Alliteration

In Old English poetry, the on-verse can be accompanied either by single or double alliteration. The choice between the two alliterative schemes often depends on the metrical structure of the verse. For instance, the occurrence of a half-lift makes a verse ‘metrically heavier,’ resulting in the frequent use of double alliteration as in verses of Types A2 and D (see 3.3 above).

As we saw in 3.2.2, the half-lift is usually associated with secondary stress on the second compound element or with ‘secondary’ stress on some derivative suffixes. Although the stress of derivative suffixes is often metrically equivalent to secondary stress in compounds, there is an important difference. Whereas secondary stress in compounds is never demoted to the dip, a derivative suffix is occasionally included in the dip:

$\times \quad \times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \quad /$
 Ne bið swylc cwēnlic þēaw (*Beo* 1940b)
 [Such is not a queenly custom]

As the secondary word-stress on the second compound element is never metrically ignored, there turn out to be two types of secondary stress, namely, one that cannot be metrically ignored and the other that can sometimes be ignored, the latter being called TERTIARY STRESS. Constituents that bear tertiary stress are

derivative suffixes such as *-ende*, *-en*, *-ra/-est*, *-ig*, *-ing*, *-lice*, *-nes*, *-sum*, and the penultimate syllable of Class II weak verbs.

The distinction between secondary and tertiary stress is metrically significant because it affects the occurrence of double alliteration: a verse with secondary stress in the half-lift position, which would be metrically heavier, is more likely to have double alliteration than one with tertiary stress in the half-lift position.

Tertiary stress is found not only in derivative suffixes but also in certain kinds of compounds with secondary elements of obscured meaning, as in *gār-secg* ‘sea,’ *Ecg-þēow*, etc. Thus a quasi-compound like *Ecg-þēow* tends to avoid double alliteration (I continue to use the backward stroke for tertiary as well as secondary stress to avoid introducing a further complexity of notation):

/ \ / x
Ecgþēow hāten (Beo 263b)
[called Ecgtheow]

/ / \ x
sunu Ecgþeowes (Beo 1550b)
[the son of Ecgtheow]

On the other hand, a full-fledged compound like *ecg-bracu* ‘sword-storm’ tends to show double alliteration when it occurs with another stress-word, as in the expanded Type D1 verse below:

/ x / \ x
atole ecgþræce (Beo 596a)
[a dreadful sword-storm]

Not only the occurrence of the half-lift but also the number of unstressed syllables in a half-line shows an interesting correlation with the alliterative pattern. In Type A, when the first dip is filled solely by an inflectional syllable, single alliteration is common in *Beowulf*; when this dip is filled by more than two unstressed syllables, double alliteration becomes more frequent:⁶

/ x / x
māga rīce (Beo 1853a)
[the kingdom of kinsmen]

/ x x / x
folce tō frōfre (Beo 14a)
[(whom God sent) to people as a consolation]

/ x x x / x
 wæpen ond gewædu
 [weapons and armour]

(*Beo* 292a)

In Type D*, in which an extra unstressed syllable is inserted after the initial lift, double alliteration is compulsory:

/ x / \ x
 mære mearcstapa
 [a notorious border-wanderer]

(*Beo* 103a)

Finally, it is also worth recalling that the addition of unstressed syllables before the first lift (i.e., anacrusis) requires half-lines of Types A and D to have double alliteration (see 3.4 above).

★★ Alliterative Rule of Proclitics

Kendall (1991: 108, 119) examines the ways the use of proclitics affects alliterative patterns in *Beowulf*, proposing an alliterative rule of proclitics, which states that double alliteration must occur when the second lift of the on-verse has

a proclitic before it. The only exception to this rule is *cwēn tō gebeddan* 'the queen as his bed-fellow' (*Beo* 665a), which is fully discussed by Griffith (2005).

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

The Four-syllable Principle: This principle has been generally accepted among Old English metrists; see, for instance, Sievers (1885: 268ff., 312), Bliss (1962: §15), and Pope (1966: 318–20, 371–2). Keyser (1969a) is among the few scholars who regard verses of three metrical positions as legitimate. For criticism of Keyser's view, see Sledd (1969), to which Keyser replies (1969b). For the importance of the Four-syllable Principle, see Terasawa (2009).

Contraction, Parasiting, and Syncopation: The occurrences of uncontracted, non-parasiting or syncopated forms in *Beowulf* are listed in Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008: 325–7).

Resolution and Kaluza's Law: For the original form of the rule, see Kaluza (1896; 1909: §§52, 65). Kaluza's discovery is revised and more precisely formulated by Bliss (1967: §§34–40). Kaluza's Law has recently attracted renewed attention with respect to the dating of Old English poetic texts (Fulk 1992). See also

‘References and Suggestions for Further Reading’ for [chapter 7](#).

Types B and C Reconsidered: For alternative analyses of Sievers’s Types B and C, see Bliss (1967), Pope (1966), Russom (1987), and Suzuki (1996a), among others. These scholars cast doubt on the two types for independent reasons. By admitting a half-line with a single lift and dividing the foot according to syntactic groupings (‘breath groups’), Bliss analyses some Type B or C verses as subtypes of Type D. Pope scores each line in musical notation, assuming that two measures in each half-line are to be performed with equal duration or isochrony. As each measure has to start with a beat, Pope assumes a suppressed lift at the beginning of verses of Types A3, B, and C where the harp would have been struck. On the assumption that every possible foot ‘mimics’ a word with respect to stress pattern, Russom dispenses with a rising foot since there is no word beginning with weak stress (except for a prefixed word).

Rhythm and Alliteration: For further studies of the interaction between rhythm and alliteration, see also Bliss (1962, 1967), who associates the occurrence of double alliteration with the position of the caesura. Although he makes the distinction between secondary and tertiary stress with reference to the occurrence of double alliteration (Bliss 1967: §§30–3), Bliss groups them together, using the symbol ‘x’ for both of them. For recent studies concerning tertiary stress, see Fulk (1992) and Huthcheson (1994, 1995).

5 Metre and Word

Overview

In the preceding chapters, we have observed two important features of Old English metre, that is, alliteration and rhythm. As briefly mentioned in [chapter 1](#), these two principles are highly relevant to the use of words in poetic texts. In what follows, we shall see in more detail how metrical factors lead Old English poets to choose between morphological variants on the one hand and avoid using certain forms of suffixes, words, compounds, and phrases on the other.¹

5.1 Preference for Shorter Words or Phrases

Although the number of unstressed syllables varies in a half-line, Old English poets tend to employ fewer unstressed syllables than prose writers. In *Beowulf*, the average number of syllables per half-line is a little less than five while in a piece of Ælfric's rhythmical prose called the *Life of St Oswald* the average length is just about seven syllables.² In the following line from the *Life of St Oswald*, the on- and off-verses, both of which would be classified as Type A, comprise eight and seven syllables respectively with anacrusis at the beginning. Recall that in poetry anacrusis rarely consists of more than two syllables and does not normally occur in the off-verse:

x x x / x x / x x / x x x / x
on ānum sylfrenan disce, and sōna þā inn ēode (St Oswald 90)₃
[on a silver dish, and soon there came in (one of the king's thanes)]

The employment of fewer unstressed syllables in a half-line naturally leads to a preference for shorter words or phrases in Old English poetry. In the *St Oswald* narrative, there often occur half-lines of 'personal name + *gehāten*':

Ōswold gehāten (St Oswald 2b, 257b)
[called Oswald]

Aidan gehāten
[called Aidan]

(*St Oswald* 53b)

Birinus gehāten
[called Birinus]

(*St Oswald* 120b)

Cynegyls gehāten
[called Cynegyls]

(*St Oswald* 121b)

In *Beowulf*, on the other hand, similar formulae always employ unprefixes *hāten* (e.g., *Grendel hāten* 102b; *Ecgbēow hāten* 263b; *Ecgbēo hāten* 373b). Indeed the Old English poetic corpus provides only a single instance of a half-line of the form ‘personal name + *gehāten*’ (*Hælend gehāten* ‘called Christ’ *Men* 4a).

Old English poets also prefer a shorter conjunction for ‘while.’ Whereas polysyllabic *þā hwīle* (*þe*) occurs only eight times in verse,⁴ the disyllabic *þenden* is in very common use (some seventy-five times in the poetry): half of the instances of the longer ‘while’ are attested in the late *Battle of Maldon*, which shows frequent deviations from the Old English metrical tradition. It is also interesting to see that in the translations of Boethius, *þā hwīle þe* in the prose version is replaced by *þenden* in the verse:

þā hwīle þe hē wile
[while He will]

(*Bo* 49.27)

læt þenden hē wile
[(God) lets (the commands) while He will]

(*Met* 11.72b)

EXERCISE: *þendan* vs. *þā hwīle* (*þe*)

In *Genesis B* 245, the conjunction *ðenden* is glossed *þā hwīle* in the margin of the manuscript. Why do you think the corrector provided this gloss for *ðenden*?

5.2 Choice between Morphological Variants

5.2.1 Adverbs of Time

In Old English, adverbs of time like *ā* ‘always,’ *gēn* ‘still,’ and *gīet* ‘yet’ have an alternative form with the suffix *-a* (derived from the adverb *ā* ‘ever’), i.e., *āwa*, *gēna*, *gīeta* respectively. In verse, the

choice between two morphological variants is often due to metrical factors.⁵ In *Beowulf*, there appear eleven instances of *gēn* while the disyllabic form *gēna* is attested only twice:

/ x / x
fremmað gēna (Beo 2800b)
[attend further to (the people's need)]

/ x x / x
Cwico wæs þā gēna (Beo 3093b)
[(he) was then still alive]

The use of disyllabic *gēna* is metrically motivated: without *-a*, verse 2800b would consist of only three syllables (see [EXERCISE ‘The Four-syllable Principle and Word-choice’](#) in 1.4) while verse 3093b would not belong to any of the five types or their subtypes:

/ x /
*fremmað gēn

/ x x /
*Cwico wæs þā gēn

Besides the two instances in the epic, there occur eleven instances of *gēna* in Old English poetry, in each of which the use of the monosyllabic *gēn* would produce a metrically unacceptable verse.⁶

EXERCISE: *Gīeta* vs. *Gīet*

In Old English poetry, the use of *gīeta* as opposed to *gīet* may be metrically determined. Although the *Beowulf* poet uses the unmarked form *gīet* exclusively, there appear thirteen instances of *gīeta* (including its variants like *gēta*, *gīta*, and *gyta*) in other Old English verse texts. Consider the following half-lines from the *Meters of Boethius* and give a metrical explanation for the use of the longer *gēta* instead of *gēt*:

1) sumne þa gēta [(Wisdom sang) yet another]	(Met 7.3b)
2) næs þa gēta [(there) was not yet (any of them)]	(Met 8.12b)
3) awer þa gēta [(not) yet anywhere]	(Met 8.33b)
4) Wē sculon ðeah gita [We must nevertheless now]	(Met 23.7a)
5) ðeah ðū hī nū gēta [though you (have) still (forgotten) it]	(Met 24.46a)

5.2.2 Agent-nouns in -end and -ende

When the agent-noun suffix *-end* is used in the nominative or accusative plural (hereafter abbreviated together as nom./acc.pl.), there are two major forms available in verse texts, one in *-end* and the other in *-ende*, the latter being formed on the analogy of the strong adjective declension of present participles. In *Beowulf*, for instance, the compound *sæliðend* in the nominative plural occurs with and without final *-e*:

sæliþende [seafarers]	(Beo 377b)
secgað sæliðend [seafarers say]	(Beo 411a)
Nū wē sæliðend [Now we seafarers]	(Beo 1818a)
þæt hit sæliðend [so that seafarers (may call) it (Beowulf's barrow)]	(Beo 2806a)

The choice between *-end* and *-ende* is not free. In the first instance, the use of the nominative plural form in *-ende* is due to metrical reasons: without final *-e*, the verse would be too short, consisting of only three syllables: **sæliðend*.

Among fourteen other instances of words in *-ende* (nom./acc.pl.) attested in *Beowulf*, twelve are compounds occupying the whole verse of Type D1 as in verse 377b above where the use of *-end* would result in too short a verse.⁷ The remaining two instances of the suffix *-ende* (nom.pl.) in *Beowulf* appear in verses of Type C

with the second lift on the long first syllable of the suffix *-ende*:

$\begin{array}{c} \times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \\ \text{þæt} \text{ ðā} \text{ hī} \text{ðende} \end{array}$
 [so that the voyagers (saw land)] (*Beo* 221a)

$\begin{array}{c} \times \quad \times \quad / \quad / \quad \times \\ \text{swā} \text{ þec} \text{ hetende} \end{array}$
 [as foes (have done) to you] (*Beo* 1828a)

Without *-e*, the verses would be analysed as Type A3 with the first lift suppressed. Note that without final *-e*, the suffix *-end* does not receive any rhythmic stress:

$\begin{array}{c} \times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \\ \text{þæt} \text{ ðā} \text{ hī} \text{ðend} \\ \times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \\ \text{swā} \text{ þec} \text{ hetend} \end{array}$

In Type A3, however, the number of initial unstressed syllables is normally three or more in *Beowulf* so that Type A3 verses like those above with only two initial unstressed syllables are rather rare.⁸

Let us now turn to three of the instances of *sæliðend*, which are repeated below with their rhythmic types for the reader's convenience:

$\begin{array}{c} / \quad \times \quad / \quad \backslash \quad \times \\ \text{secga} \text{ ð} \text{ sæli} \text{ðend} \end{array}$
(*Beo* 411a) D*1₉

$\begin{array}{c} \times \quad \times \quad / \quad / \quad \times \\ \text{Nū} \text{ wē} \text{ sæli} \text{ðend} \end{array}$
(*Beo* 1818a) C

$\begin{array}{c} \times \quad \times \quad / \quad / \quad \times \\ \text{þæt} \text{ hit} \text{ sæli} \text{ðend} \end{array}$
(*Beo* 2806a) C

In verse 411a, the use of the form in *-ende* would result in a

hypermetric verse, i.e. *secgað sæliðende*. As hypermetric verses usually appear in clusters, however, there might be no strong justification for the isolated occurrence of the extensive verse here. With the longer *sæliðende*, the verses of 1818a and 2806a would be analysed as Type D1 with anacrusis, as in **Nū wē sæliðende* and **þæt hit sæliðende*. But this rhythmic pattern normally

requires double alliteration and appears almost exclusively with secondary rather than tertiary stress. Note also that anacrusis rarely consists of two syllables. Other instances of agent-nouns in *-end* almost always appear in metrical contexts where the longer form would result in metrical anomaly. Thus, in *Beowulf*, the two metrical variants are in almost perfect complementary distribution.

In other Old English verse texts, agent-nouns in *-ende* (nom./acc.pl.) also occur almost invariably in a context where final *-e* is metrically indispensable. Particularly noticeable is that the vast majority of the agent-nouns in *-ende* form compounds to fill a whole verse of Type D1, as in *Beowulf* 377b. While outside *Beowulf* a majority of words in *-end* (nom./acc.pl.) occur in a context where the use of *-ende* would cause metrical difficulties, the form in *-end* does occasionally appear in a context where both forms are metrically acceptable. In the verses of Type B below, for instance, the use of forms in *-ende* would add only one unstressed syllable to the second dip, giving acceptable verses of Type B such as

hū ðā wīgēndē hýra

x x / x /
hū ðā wīgēnd hýra

[how the warriors (bore) their (wounds)]

(*Finn* 47a)

x x / x x /
Swā ðā wīgēnd mid him

[So the warriors together]

(*And* 1053b)₁₀

x xx / x /
and hire eardēnd mid

[and its dwellers together]

(*PPs* 74.3.1b)

x x x / x /
þæt him þā fērend on

[(the whale feels) that the sailors (are staying) on him]

(*Whale* 25a)

The occurrence of the form *-end* in verses compatible with *-ende* can be explained if we conjecture that the shorter *-end*, being the regular or unmarked form of an agent-noun suffix, could be generally adopted unless its use produced anomalous rhythm; the longer *-ende*, borrowed from the adjectival declension, was employed primarily for the sake of metre.

5.2.3 The Relative Infrequency of Agent-nouns in *-ere* in Old English Poetry

In addition to *-end* mentioned above, Old English had two other agent-noun suffixes, namely *-a* (e.g., *hunt-a* ‘huntsman,’ *lid-a* ‘traveller’) and *-ere* (e.g., *leorn-ere* ‘student, disciple,’ *boc-ere* ‘scribe, scholar’), the latter of which has developed into the most productive suffix in Present-day English.

While the poet of *Beowulf* very frequently resorts to words in *-a* and *-end* (around seventy and around forty different instances respectively, including compounds), this heroic epic provides only one instance of a derivative in *-ere*, i.e., *lēas-scēaweras* ‘deceitful observers, spies’ (253), which is a hapax legomenon in Old English and refers to Beowulf and his retainers.¹¹ Formations in *-ere* seem to be rare in the rest of Old English poetry as well.

In a feast scene in Old English poetry, drinking and music are indispensable elements. In *Beowulf*, a counsellor of Hrothgar named Æschere, who partakes of a feast at Heorot just before being killed by Grendel’s mother, is referred to as *bēor-scealca sum* ‘one of the beer-drinkers’ (1240). Later in the epic, those drinking at Hygelac’s magnificent hall are described as *ealo-drincende* ‘ale-drinkers’ (1945). The first element *ealu* is combined with *wosa* to designate ‘ale-tippler’ in the *Fortunes of Men* 49. It is interesting to note here that the form *drincere* ‘drinker, drunkard’ never appears in verse texts. In prose, on the other hand, it occurs three times as simplex and four times with a prefix, i.e., *ofer-drincere* ‘drunkard.’

EXERCISE: Harpers in Old English Literature

In Old English poetry, the songs of a minstrel are often accompanied by a harp. Did Old English poets use the word *hearpere* ‘harper’? Does *hearpere* occur in prose? Consult either Healey and Venezky’s *Microfiche Concordance to Old English* or the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*. For the verse, Bessinger’s *Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* is also available.

Why do formations in *-ere* tend to be avoided in Old English verse texts? Among other factors, metre might be responsible for the scarcity of these formations.¹² Notice first that unlike *-a* and *-end*, the ending *-ere* has two unstressed syllables in succession. As we saw in 3.3, the verse-final dip is not allowed to contain more

than one unstressed syllable. Thus, the use of long-stemmed words in *-ere* like *hearpere* and *drincere*, which might have been useful for describing feasting scenes, is highly restricted in poetry; it cannot be used as the second foot of Types A (**mæ̌rōst hēařpērā̌* ‘the most famous of harpers’)¹³ and C (**sē̌ ēaťudřincērē̌* ‘the ale-drinker’). *Ealu-drincere* and *hearpere* could not fit very well within Types D and E, either. Neither verses like **ēaťudřincērē̌* (D1)¹⁴ nor verses like **sā̌ngērēš gȳď* ‘the singer’s song’ would be metrical in strict verse, where short syllables in derivative suffixes are not usually allowed to bear a half-lift.

Formations in *-end* and *-a*, on the other hand, would be much more useful for the poets in constructing verses of Type A, C, D, or E. The long derivative suffix *-end* is allowed to bear a half-lift in Type D1 half-lines (e.g., *rō̌ndhæ̌bbē̌ndrā̌* ‘[no other] shield-bearer,’ *Beo* 861a) and E (e.g., *ā̌gē̌ndēš ē̌sť* ‘the owner’s favour,’ *Beo* 3075a). The agentive-formative *-end* can also bear the second lift of Type C: *wǐð̌ hē̌ttē̌ndū̌m̌* ‘against enemies’ (*Beo* 3004a). The ending *-a*, which consists of a single unstressed syllable, serves as the final dip of Type A2 (e.g., *Wē̌ohstā̌ň bā̌nā̌* ‘Weohstan (became) a slayer,’ *Beo* 2613b) and Type C (e.g., *tō̌ mū̌ð̌bonā̌ň* ‘[Grendel became] a mouth-slayer,’ *Beo* 2079b).

5.3 Constraints on Compound Formation

One of the most significant features of Old English poetic diction is the use of nominal (i.e., substantive and adjective) compounds. In *Beowulf*, for instance, the number of such compounds is so large that on average it occurs every third line, with some 1100 total instances. In this section, we see how the formation of nominal compounds is affected by metrical constraints.

5.3.1 ‘Prosaic’ *Here-toga* and ‘Poetic’ *Folc-toga*

An examination of the Old English corpus reveals an interesting distributional difference between two synonymous compounds for ‘chieftain, commander,’ that is, *folc-toga* and *here-toga*. The compound *folc-toga* is found exclusively in poetry. It is attested in nine Old English poems.¹⁵ By contrast, *here-toga* seems to be quite

rare in Old English verse texts. There are only three instances of this compound: in the *Gifts of Men* 76 and the *Meters of Boethius* 1.47, 10.46. Old English prose writers, on the other hand, used *here-toga* very frequently: the number of prose occurrences for this compound is 161.¹⁶ Interestingly, the two instances of *here-toga* in the *Meters of Boethius* correspond to the same compound in the prose version.¹⁷ The occurrence of *here-toga* in the *Meters* could, then, be due to the fact that the poet was following a prose source.¹⁸

Important to note here is that *folc-toga* and *here-toga* differ in syllabic structure: in the former, the first element has a single long stressed syllable, followed by a second element consisting of a resolvable sequence, i.e., a short syllable and an unstressed syllable; in the latter, both elements consist of a resolvable sequence.

An examination of *Beowulf* shows that while compound sequences with syllable structures like *folc-toga* very often occur (e.g., *cwealm-bealu* ‘death,’ *ecg-hete* ‘sword-hatred, war,’ *gūþ-wine* ‘battle-friend, weapon,’ *hēah-cyning* ‘high king,’ *sæ-wudu* ‘sea-wood, ship’), those like *here-toga* tend to be avoided. In *Beowulf*, *mere-faran* ‘seafarer’ is the single genuine exception to the constraint. Other exceptions are only apparent. *Meðel-stede* ‘place of assembly, battle-field’ (*Beo* 1082), for instance, can avoid the *here-toga* pattern by ignoring an unetymological vowel in the first element (i.e., *meðel-*, cf. Go *maþl*). As we saw in 4.2.2, earlier forms without parasitic vowels are occasionally required for the sake of metre. On the other hand, compounds like *worold-cyninga* ‘of earthly kings’ (*Beo* 1684, [*wyruld-*] 3180) and *fæder-æþelum* ‘paternal ranks’ (*Beo* 911) have short medial unstressed vowels in the first and second elements respectively, which can be subject to syncope to produce the metrically acceptable variants *worold-/wyruld-cyninga* and *fæder-æþelum* (see 4.2.3).

Compound sequences of the *here-toga* type are uncommon not only in *Beowulf* but also in other Old English verse texts, whether heroic or religious, earlier or later, most exceptions being explainable with reference to parasiting or syncope. The religious poems show a higher incidence of *heofon-cyning* ‘heaven-king,’ which at first glance violates the constraint: neither *heofon* or *cyning* has a parasitic or syncopatable vowel to be metrically ignored. But this compound turns out to be a systematic exception;

as a parasitic vowel often arises before a nasal or liquid, the unstressed vowel of *heofon* could be regarded as ‘pseudo-parasitic,’ making *heofon-cyning* (with the pseudo-parasitic vowel ignored) metrically equivalent to *folc-toga*.

Returning to the sharp distributional contrast between the two compounds for ‘chieftain,’ we can now reason that Old English poets might have avoided *here-toga* and instead coined the metrically acceptable alternative *folc-toga*. On the other hand, Old English prose writers, who were not subject to the constraint, were able to make full and free use of *here-toga*.

5.3.2 Hilde- and Hild-compounds

In verse, the second elements of a resolvable sequence tend to avoid forming compounds not only with the first elements of a resolvable sequence but also with those of a long stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. For a start, let us take a look at an interesting contrast between *hilde-* and *hild-*compounds in *Beowulf*.

In the warfare vocabulary common to Old English poems, *hild* ‘battle’ is in very frequent use, both as simplex and as compound. When *hild* forms compounds, there are two variants, *hild-* and *hilde-*, the latter being the earlier stem with the connecting vowel -e retained. In *Beowulf*, *hild-*always appears when the second element of the compound is a resolvable sequence, as with *hild-frecan* ‘fighter’ (2366), *hild-fruman* ‘war-chief’ (1678, 2649, 2835), and *hild-latan* ‘those sluggish in battle, cowards’ (2846). Note that *hild-*, which consists of a single long stressed syllable, is metrically equivalent to *folc-*.

In sharp contrast to *hild-*, the longer *hilde-*, which has a long stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one, does not form compounds with words like *-fruma*, except for *-frecan* (2205) and *-gicelum* (1606). (In the rest of Old English poetry, *hilde-* is never prefixed to words of the *-fruma* pattern while *hild-* does form compounds with such second elements.) Although the hapax legomenon *hilde frecan* (2205) appears in the *Beowulf* manuscript, it has been emended to *hild-frecan* by most recent editors:¹⁹ elsewhere the form *hild-frecan* is found (cf. *Beowulf* 2366; *Andreas* 126, 1070). As the reader might notice, *hilde-gicelum* ‘battle-icicles’ (1606) is not an exception: it does not produce the *hilde-fruma*

pattern with the syncopated *-gicelum* assumed.

An examination of the Old English poetic corpus shows that a metrical sequence like *hilde-fruma* is avoided in other poetic compounds, most apparent violations being accommodated by ignoring a parasitic vowel (e.g., *aldor-bealu* ‘injury to life, death’ *Beo* 1676) or a syncopatable vowel (e.g., *æppel-fealuwe* ‘apple-fallow’ *Beo* 2165).

Although neither of the elements contains a parasitic or syncopatable vowel, *Hrefna-wudu* ‘Ravenswood’ (*Beo* 2925) does not constitute an exception. This place-name compound has the first element in the genitive plural so that it might not count as a genuine compound but as two words. It is important to note here that the constraints on the *hilde-fruma* and *here-toga* patterns do not take effect when they consist of two separate words such as *holdne hige* ‘loyal mind’ (*Beo* 267), *dēofla hryre* ‘the devils’ fall’ (*Beo* 1680), *Gēata cyning* ‘the king of the Geats’ (*Beo* 2356), *brimes faroðe* ‘the current of the sea’ (*Beo* 28), *sele wunian* ‘remain (in) the hall’ (*Beo* 3128). Thus, *Hrefna-wudu*, a fossilized noun phrase, is not subject to metrical constraints. Note that Fulk, Bjork, and Niles decompound the sequence and read *Hrefna Wudu*.

Let us now summarize the constraints on compounds discussed above:

Metrical Constraints on Compounds: The compound sequences of the *here-toga* and *hilde-fruma* pattern are avoided in poetic compounds. Because of the constraints, a first element of *here-* or *hilde-*type cannot form a compound with a resolvable second element unless one of the following conditions is fulfilled:

(a) The first element truncates the unstressed syllable, e.g., *hilde-fruman* = > *hild-fruman*.

(b) The first element has a parasitic vowel to be metrically disregarded, e.g., *meðel-stede* = > *meðel-stede*; *attor-sceaþan* = > *attor-sceaþan*.

(c) Either the first or the second element has a syncopatable vowel to be metrically disregarded, e.g., *worold-cyninga* = > *worold-cyninga*; *fæder-æþelum* = > *fæder-æþelum*; *hilde-gicelum* = > *hilde-gicelum*.

EXERCISE: Restoring *Beowulf* 3153a

In *Beowulf* 3153a, which is part of a very corrupt passage in the manuscript, the form ... *gas* is faint but visible. To restore this verse, several readings are proposed, most of which attempt to reconstruct a compound. Look at different editions of the epic to find out what kinds of restorations have been suggested. In the light of our compound constraints, can you say anything about the plausibility of these emendations?

5.3.3 Absence of Some Possible Compounds

Metrical constraints account for the absence of what would otherwise be possible compounds. In *Beowulf*, there appear two instances of *gūð-wine*, which serves as a kenning for ‘sword.’ Poets do not construct analogical kennings such as **beado-wine*, **heaðo-wine*, or **hilde-wine* because these would result in an unacceptable *here-toga* or *hilde-fruma* pattern. The kenning **hild-wine*, without the connecting vowel, although metrically acceptable, is not attested in *Beowulf* or any other poetry.

Old English poets make use of kennings for ‘ship’ by combining ‘sea’ words with the second element *wudu*. The words for ‘sea’ which occur with *-wudu* are *brim-*, *flōd-*, *holm-*, *sā-*, and *sund-*, each of them being of the *folc* type. On the other hand, ‘sea’ words of the *here* or *hilde* type, such as *geofon-*, *lagu-*, *mere-*, and *ēgor-*, never take *-wudu* to denote the idea of ‘ship’ because of the constraints on compound sequences.

EXERCISE: Poetic Compounds for the Drinking Hall

Words for ‘hall’ such as *ærn*, *heal(l)*, *reced*, *sæl*, *seld*, and *sele* often form compounds to denote noble dwellings. They may, for instance, take as first element words indicating ‘mead’ or ‘wine’ such as *medo* and *wīn*, as with *medo-ærn*, *wīn-ærn*, etc. Make a list of possible compounds for ‘mead/wine-hall.’ Then check which compounds actually appear in Old English poetry and which do not, by consulting Bessinger’s concordance. Can the absence of some possible compounds for ‘mead/wine-hall’ be due to metrical factors?

Compound constraints also explain the restricted inflection of certain compounds. In the Old English poetic corpus, for instance, compounds like *endedæg* ‘last day’ and *ende-stæf* ‘end’ appear only in their uninflected forms, except for two instances of *ende-dæge*.²⁰ The *Beowulf* poet, for instance, uses the forms *ende-dæg* (acc.sg. 637; nom.sg. 3035) and *ende-stæf* (acc.sg. 1753). Inflected forms such as **ende-dagas*, **ende-dagum*, **ende-stafas*, **endestafum*, etc., are not attested. The absence of inflected forms like **ende-dagas*, **ende-dagum*, **ende-stafas*, and **ende-stafum* can be attributed to our metrical constraints, since each of them consists of an unmetrical sequence with the *hilde-fruma* pattern. On the other hand, writers of Old English prose do not restrict inflection of these compounds: twelve instances of *ende-dæge*, four instances of *ænde-dæge*, one instance of *ænde-dege*, three instances of *ende-dæges*, and one instance of *ende-stæfe* are attested in prose.

★★ Reasons for the Compound Constraints

The constraints on the *here-toga* and *hilde-fruma* patterns arise because such compound sequences do not fit well into established verse types. Compounds of the *here-toga* type, which in no way fit into Type B, are not suited to Type C (

**pæt se beado-cyning* ‘that the battle-king’), Type D1 (

**beorht beado-cyning* ‘magnificent battle-king’;

**beado-cyninges* ‘battle-king’s’; **pēgn beado-cyninges*

‘thane of the battle-king’), or Type E (**beado-cyning beorht*

**beado-cyninges pēgn*) because resolution is quite rare before another resolvable sequence and also because resolution of a half-lift is very rare. On the other hand, the sequence of the *hilde-fruma* pattern is not suited to Type C or E. The Type A

analysis of such a sequence (e.g., *hild-sele* ‘war-hall’) is avoided, because a short lift usually occurs immediately after a lift. A compound like *hilde-sele* does not fit well in Type D2 (

**heah hild-sele* ‘high war-hall’) where resolution of a half-lift is very rare.

5.3.4 Compounds and Syntactic Phrases

In 5.3.2, we observed that syntactic phrases do not adhere to the

same metrical constraints as compounds do. What this means is that the constraints could provide another criterion (besides the semantic and syntactic ones) for distinguishing between compounds and syntactic phrases, a problem which has long troubled Old English lexicographers. Note that Old English scribes usually wrote forms separately which were elements of a single compound.

Above all, the treatment of *helle* ‘hell’ sequences (e.g., *helle duru* ‘hell gate’) has presented serious difficulties to Old English lexicographers. If the first element *helle* is the earlier stem form, the sequence would be regarded as a compound; if *helle* is the genitive of the later stem form *hel(l)*, on the other hand, the sequence would be a syntactic phrase. This uncertainty concerning the interpretation of *helle* sequences results in much disagreement among scholars. Consider the following lines taken from three different poems where the form *helle* is followed by resolvable words like *bryne* ‘fire,’ *bealu* ‘bale, evil,’ and *sceaþa* ‘fiend, devil’:

hearde gehæfted in hellebryne (Jud 116)
[severely imprisoned in hell-fire]

hāt helle bealu, þæt þū mōste hālig sċīnan (Christ C 1426)
[the violent evil of hell, so that you might shine holy]

þæs þe hēo gehȳrde þone hellesceaþan (El 956)
[because she heard the hell-fiend (overpowered)]

As these instances show, the editors of the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* interpret the manuscript forms *helle bryne* and *helle sceaþan* as compounds and *helle bealu* as a syntactic phrase. Most other editors and lexicographers agree with the compound analysis of *helle bryne* in *Judith* 116.²¹ The sequence *helle sceaþan* (El 956) is also regarded as a compound in other editions, dictionaries, and concordances.²² On the other hand, disagreement is found in the treatment of *helle bealu* in *Christ C* 1426.²³

Our metrical constraints on compounds support a syntactic phrase analysis of *helle bryne*, *helle sceaþan*, and *helle bealu* because they consist of the *hilde-fruma* sequence proscribed in compounds.

EXERCISE: *Helle* Sequence

In *Christ C*, we find another instance of the *helle* sequence,

helle fyr ‘hell fire’ (1269), which some editors/lexicographers (e.g., Krapp-Dobbie, Healey-Venezky) treat as a syntactic phrase while others (e.g., Bosworth-Toller) treat it as a compound. Note first that our compound constraints do not apply to this sequence, which does not have the second element of the resolvable sequence. Observe the line where *helle fyr* appears in *Christ C*:

grim helle fyr, gearo tō wite
[the grim fire of hell, ready as punishment]

(*Christ C* 1269)

Which analysis do you think should be preferred on the basis of alliterative evidence?

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

Except for some of my own previous work, not much attention has been generally paid to the interaction between metre and word-choice/formation in Old English.

Detailed discussion of the choice between agent-nouns in *-end* and those in *-ende* is found in Terasawa (2007a). Terasawa (2001) explained the scarcity of agent-nouns in *-ere* in Old English poetry on metrical grounds. For the complementary distribution of *hild-* and *hilde-*compounds, see Weyhe (1905), Sievers-Brunner (Brunner 1951: §168, Anm. 2), Campbell (1959: § 349), Bammesberger (1980), Terasawa (1994, 1995, 1998), and Fulk (2007b). The constraints on compound formation in verse were fully discussed in Terasawa (1989, 1992, 1994). Terasawa (1995, 1998) provided a metrical criterion to distinguish between compounds and syntactic phrases with special reference to the *helle* sequence.

6 Metre and Grammar

Overview

In Old English, there are significant grammatical discrepancies between verse and prose in, for example, the concord between subjects and adjectives/participles, the declension of nouns and adjectives, the use of multiple negation, the ratio of case forms to prepositional phrases, and word order. This chapter demonstrates some peculiarities of verse grammar and explains why they might arise by reference to interaction between verse grammar and the metrical principles described in the previous chapters.

6.1 Nouns and Adjectives

6.1.1 Concord between Subject and Adjective/Participle

When the subject is plural, the adjective/participle can be uninflected or inflected with the ending in *-e* (generalized for all genders). Both in prose and in poetry, inflected forms seem to be the norm, but in the latter uninflected forms occur especially when the adjective/participle is placed away from the subject it governs. In the following passage from *Elene*, the past participle form of *forþylman* ‘envelop’ does not take the ending *-e* in concord with the plural subject (*hīe* ‘they’), which is placed three half-lines away from the participle.¹ Compare the Type A and C half-lines below that contain the past participle of *laðian* ‘summon’:

þær hīe in wylme nū
drēogaþ dēaðcwale in dracan fæðme,
þēostrum forþylmed (El 764b–6a)

[there now in the surging fire they endure the agony of death
in the dragon’s embrace, enveloped with darkness]

/ x / x
laðode wæron (El 383b)
[(they) were summoned (to the palace)]

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \times & \times & & / & & / & \times \\ \text{þa} & \text{hīe} & \text{lādod} & \text{wæron} & & & \\ \text{[when they were summoned]} & & & & & & \end{array}$

(El 556b)

In the first instance, the past participle takes the plural ending *-e* in agreement with the relatively ‘distant’ plural subject (*hēo* ‘they’ in 382b) while in the second instance the participle does not take the ending *-e* in concord with the immediately preceding subject in the plural. These anomalies could be due to metrical factors: if the inflected form were used in the latter, the verse would be of Type A with (disyllabic) anacrusis, which is uncommon in the off-verse:

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} * & \times & \times & & \times & & \times \\ * \text{þa} & \text{hīe} & \text{lādode} & \text{wæron} & & & \\ \text{resolved: } * \text{lādod} & \text{wæron} & & & & & \end{array}$

EXERCISE: Uninflected Past Participle

Consider the following passage from the *Battle of Brunanburh*. Although it refers to the accusative singular masculine *sunu* (42b), the past participle form *forgrunden* ‘destroyed’ (43b) is uninflected or without *-ne*. Provide a metrical account for the use of the uninflected form:

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & & & & \text{and his sunu forlet} & & \\ \text{on wælstōwe} & \text{wundun} & \text{forgrunden} & & & & \\ \text{[and (he) left his son destroyed by wounds on the slaughter-place]} & & & & & & \end{array}$

(Brun 42b–3)

6.1.2 Weak Adjectives without a Demonstrative

In Old English, most adjectives can be declined either weak or strong. The strong declension is used when the adjective stands alone, as in *geonge menn* ‘young men’ (masc.nom.pl.) whereas the weak form occurs when the adjective is preceded by a determiner such as a demonstrative (e.g., *se geonga man* ‘the young man’) or a possessive (e.g., *mīn geonga frēond* ‘my young friend’). This rule is, however, somewhat relaxed in the poetry. Consider the following half-line from *Beowulf*:

$\begin{array}{c} \text{brāde rīce} \\ \text{[the broad kingdom]} \end{array}$

(Beo 2207b)

In this instance, the adjective *brāde* is declined weak even though it does not follow a demonstrative. In prose, one would expect *þæt brāde rice*. The use of weak adjectives before nouns without the demonstrative originated in earlier Germanic where nouns with weak adjectives alone would have indicated a definite referent or idea. Constructions of this sort are much more common in *Beowulf* than in the other poetry, in accord with the generally archaic nature of the language in *Beowulf* (see 7.1).³

In the half-line above, the use of the archaic construction is metrically motivated. The demonstrative would add anacrusis, which tends to be avoided in the off-verse (**þæt brāde rice*).⁴ In *Beowulf*, instances of ‘weak adj. + noun’ occur primarily in half-lines of Type A where anacrusis is normally avoided, that is, in on-verses with single alliteration (cf. 2347a below), in on-verses with two feet of equal length (cf. 2845a below), and in off-verses (cf. 2207b above).

/ × / ×
 sīdan herge (Beo 2347a)
 [with the large army]

/ × / ×
 lænan lifes (Beo 2845a)
 [(the end) of the transitory life]

EXERCISE: Weak Adjectives without a Demonstrative

In *Beowulf*, we find instances in which weak adjectives follow nouns without the demonstrative, e.g., *bēahsele beorhta* ‘the shining ring-hall’ (Beo 1177a). Most other instances also form half-lines of Type A2 with the half-lift resolved in the second metrical position (cf. Beo 1243a, 1343a, 1435a, 1553a, 2474a, etc.). Give a metrical account for why the weak form (i.e., *beorhta*) is adopted without a demonstrative.

On the other hand, the *Beowulf* poet does employ a demonstrative pronoun with ‘weak adj. + noun’ or ‘noun + weak adj.’ as long as this does not cause a metrical problem:

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \quad /$
 wæs se grimma gæst (Beo 102a)
 [The grim demon was (called Grendel)]

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad / \quad \times$
 Swā se secg hwata (Beo 3028a)
 [Thus the valiant man]

$\times \quad / \quad \times \quad /$
 in sēle þām hēan (Beo 713b)
 [in the high hall]

In these instances, the poet placed the demonstratives *se* and *þām* in the first dip of Types B and C or in the second dip of B.

The use of weak adjectives without a demonstrative, though rare, can be found in verses where addition of the demonstrative does not result in irregular rhythm:

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad / \quad \times$
 oþ þæt hrefn blaca (Beo 1801a)
 [until the black raven (announced the joy of the heaven)]

$\times \quad \times \quad / \quad \times \quad /$
 ofer ealde riht (Beo 2330a)
 [contrary to the ancient law]

In both instances, the demonstrative could be added to the first dip

of Types B ($\overset{\times}{o}f \overset{\times}{þ}æt \overset{\times}{e}alde \overset{\times}{r}iht$) and C ($\overset{\times}{o}þ \overset{\times}{þ}æt \overset{\times}{s}e \overset{\times}{h}refn \overset{\times}{b}laca$) respectively without causing any metrical anomalies.

6.1.3 Weak ‘Man’

In *Beowulf*, beside the commonly used *man(n)*, which is a masculine noun of minor declension, the weak by-form *manna* appears six times, always in the accusative singular.⁵ Why did the poet resort to the weak form instead of the ordinary form?

To answer this question, let us observe the following verses from *Beowulf* that contain weak *manna*:

$/ \quad \times \quad / \quad \times$
 lēofne mannan (Beo 297b, 1943b, 2127a, 3108a)
 [beloved man]

/ x / x
 earmran mannon (Beo 577b)
 [more wretched man]

/ x / x
 ānne mannan (Beo 2774b)
 [one man]

Since each of the Type A verses consists of four syllables, the use of the ordinary monosyllabic *man* (acc.sg.) would result in too short a verse with only three syllables: **lēofne man*, **earmran man*, and **ānne man*.⁶

In the rest of Old English poetry, there also occur instances of the weak form for ‘man’ (mostly in the acc.sg.) besides the commonly used *man(n)*. The use of the weak by-form is again due to metrical factors, a majority of instances being attested in Type A verses of four syllables where the use of the strong monosyllabic *man/mon* would not be metrically acceptable.⁷

It is interesting to note that in the Type A3 verse below, the use of monosyllabic *mon* (acc.sg.) would yield an unknown verse type (**Hē sceal þone mon*)

x x x x / x
 Hē sceal þone monnan (Met 27.31a)
 [He must (love) the man]

whereas the corresponding part in the prose version of *Boethius* (124.16) reads (*lufie*) *þone man*, resorting to the shorter form. It is thus highly probable that the *Meters* poet’s choice of the longer *monnan* would have been guided by the metre.

The following verse contains the only instance of *monnan* in a metrical context where *mon* (acc.sg.) would also be acceptable (

Mōn ic ne bīte):
 / x x x / x
 Monnan ic ne bīte (Rid 65.5a)
 [No man I bite]

The weak form *monnan* (acc.sg.) might be used for purely grammatical reasons. To indicate that the element at the beginning of a clause (the position usually associated with the subject) is in fact the object, the morphologically more distinctive acc.sg. form *monnan* might suit better than the ambiguous *mon*.

★★ The Use of *Man(n)* in Poetry

Old English poets would have used the ‘marked’ or weak *mannan* (acc.sg.) primarily to satisfy metrical requirements whereas they would have resorted to the ‘unmarked’ or ordinary *man(n)* (acc.sg.) otherwise, i.e., either in contexts where the shorter form is metrically required or in those where both the short and long forms are metrically possible. The *Beowulf* poet seems to have restricted the use of *man* (acc.sg.) to metrical contexts where the weak counterpart is not permitted, but the single attestation of *man* (acc.sg.) prevents us from reaching any definite conclusion.

6.2 Negation

In Old English, multiple negation or negative concord often occurs in prose. In the following sentences, for example, two or more negatives do not cancel each other out:

and þonne hī gegadrad hæfð, þonne ēowað hē hī, *nallas ne hild*

Bo 61.11–12

[and when (the earthly power) has joined them (i.e., vices),
then it shows them (but) does not conceal (them)]

for ðām ðe þā Iudeiscan noldon *næfre* brūcan *nānes* þinges mid þām
hæþenum (EHom 5.124)

[for the Jewish people would never enjoy any thing among the
heathen people]

In *Beowulf*, on the other hand, multiple negation is somewhat rare. The adverb *ne*, for example, rarely occurs in clauses that contain another negative. The following verse is the only instance in the epic where *næfre* is accompanied by *ne*:⁸

næfre hit æt hilde *ne* swāc (Beo 1460b)
[never had it failed (any man) at battle]

The scarcity of multiple negation in verse could be partly due to the poets’ attempts to make a half-line ‘economical’ with fewer unstressed syllables (see 5.1). Compare the corresponding passages between the *Prose Boethius* and the *Meters of Boethius* where the negative quartet in the former has been reduced to single negation:

ne eft þe ne geortrȳwe nānes gōdes on nānre wiðerweardnesse (Bo 14.22–3)

[nor (do you) again despair of any good in any adversity]

ne eft tō wāclīce
geortrēowe æniges gōdes,
þonne þē for worulde wiðerwearda mæsð
þinga þræage (Met 5.34b–7a)

[nor again too feebly despair of any good, when in the world
the greatest of adversities would afflict you]

EXERCISE: Multiple Negation

The following is the manuscript reading of a hypermetric line from the *Dream of the Rood* where *nænigum* forms multiple negation with the preceding *ne*:

opene inwidhlemmas. Ne dorste ic hira nænigum sceððan (Dream 47)
[the open wounds of malice. I did not dare to harm any of them]

Can this reading be supported on metrical grounds? If not, give reasons and provide an alternative reading.

6.3 Inflectional Forms and Prepositional Phrases

In Old English, which is more synthetic (or less analytic) than Present-day English, inflectional forms are often found where prepositional phrases would be expected. Especially in the conservative language of poetry, ‘archaic’ inflectional forms tend to occur more commonly than in prose. When referring to the word *sweord* ‘sword’ as an instrument, the *Beowulf* poet makes use of the *mid*-phrase only once in the following verse of Type B:

x x x / x x /
þæt ic mid sweorde ofslōh (Beo 574b)
[(it befell) that I killed (nine water-monsters) with my sword]

On the other hand, he uses inflectional forms (i.e., *sweorde*, *sweordum*) eight times to express the meaning ‘with.’ In some instances the choice of inflectional forms over the *mid*-phrases

might be determined by the metre:

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & / & \times & & / & \times & \\ \text{dēoran} & & \text{sweorde} & & & & \end{array}$
 [with (my) excellent sword] (Beo 561a)

In verse 561a (cf. also 586a, 2492a, 2904b), insertion of the preposition would make the half-line metrically anomalous since a Type A verse with anacrusis normally requires double alliteration, and anacrusis rarely occurs in Type A where the two syntactic groupings have the same metrical weight, as in *dēoran* || *sweorde* (see 3.4):

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \times & & / & \times & & / & \times \\ *mid & dēoran & sweorde & & & & \end{array}$

However, the addition of *mid* would be metrically acceptable in other cases:

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \times & \times & \times & \times & \times & / & \times \\ \text{forþan} & \text{ic} & \text{hine} & \text{sweorde} & & & \end{array}$
 [because I (will not kill) him with the sword] (Beo 679a)

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \times & & \times \times & & / & \times & / \\ \text{þonne} & \text{ic} & \text{sweorde} & \text{drep} & & & \end{array}$
 [when I struck (the mortal foe) with the sword] (Beo 2880b)

The poet need not have hesitated to add an extra syllable to verse 679a since in *Beowulf* the dip of Type A3 can comprise six

unstressed syllables ($\text{for}^{\times}\text{þan}^{\times} \text{ic}^{\times} \text{hine}^{\times} [\text{mid}]^{\times} \text{swe}^{\times}\text{orde}^{\times}$). In verse 2880b of Type B, the addition of an extra syllable in the first dip

would be acceptable ($\text{þon}^{\times}\text{ne}^{\times} \text{ic}^{\times} [\text{mid}]^{\times} \text{swe}^{\times}\text{orde}^{\times} \text{drep}^{\times}$). Furthermore, verse 574b, the only instance with *mid sweorde*,

could do without the preposition ($\text{þæt}^{\times} \text{ic}^{\times} \text{swe}^{\times}\text{orde}^{\times} \text{ofslōh}^{\times}$). Here the choice between inflected forms and prepositional phrases is attributable to the archaic style of the poem rather than to metrical necessity.

In Old English poetry, however, there do seem to be cases where metre would be relevant to the choice between two forms. Consider a passage from the *Seafarer* where the verb *hweorfan* ‘go’ occurs twice:

Forþon nū mīn hyge *hweorfeð* ofer hreþerlocan,
 mīn mōdsefa mid mereflōde
 ofer hwæles ēþel *hweorfeð* wīde,
 eorþan scēatas

(*Sea* 58–61a)

[Indeed now my mind goes beyond the enclosure of my breast,
 my soul goes widely along with the ocean-stream over the
 whale's home, (over) the expanses of the earth]

While the first *hweorfan* appears with a prepositional phrase (*ofer hreþerlocan*, 58b), the second *hweorfan* takes both a prepositional phrase (*ofer hwæles ēþel*, 60a) and an inflectional form ((*eorþan*) *scēatas*, 61a). As *hweorfan* is commonly intransitive, it is not likely that (*eorþan*) *scēatas* would serve as a direct object of the verb. The noun phrase appears without the preposition in *Seafarer* 61a for metrical reasons. If it were preceded by the preposition *ofer*, the verse (**ofer eorþan scēatas*) would be metrically unacceptable: anacrusis is rarely associated with single alliteration or with a Type A verse consisting of two syntactic groups that have the same metrical weight. On the other hand, both

ofer hreþerlocan and *ofer hwæles ēþel* are acceptable verses of Type C.

The *Meters of Boethius* and the prose version provide intriguing examples of choice between inflectional forms and prepositional phrases.⁹ Compare the following passages:

Gif þonne hwelc mon mæge geſon þā birhtu þæs heofenlican leohtes *mid*
hlūtrum ēagum his mōdes (Bo 89.20–1)

[If then any man can see the brightness of the heavenly light
 with the clear eyes of his mind]

Gif þonne hælēða hwilc *hlūtrum ēagum*
 mōdes sīnes mæg æfre ofſon
 hiofones leohtes hlūtre beorhto (Met 21.37–9)

[If then any of men with the clear eyes of his mind can ever
 gaze on the clear brightness of the light of the heaven]

The poet of the *Meters* uses an inflectional form (*hlūtrum ēagum*) instead of a *mid*-phrase in order to avoid the anacrusis in the off-verse of Type A. In the metrical version, on the other hand, an

idiomatic *mid*-phrase can be taken over from the prose version when there is no metrical impediment:

ac se anwealda hæfð ealle his gesceafta swa *mid his bridle* befangene and
getogene and gemanode (Bo 49.2–3)

[but the Ruler has surrounded and instructed and restrained all
His creatures with His bridle]

Hæfð se alwealda ealle gesceafta
gebæt *mid his bridle*, hafað butu gedon,
ealle gemanode and eac getogen (Met 11.22–4)

[the Ruler has bound all creatures with His bridle, (He) has done
both, restrained all and instructed them too]

In the Type A verse *gebæt mid his bridle*, metre authorizes the occurrence of the preposition in the first dip where the number of unstressed syllables can be more than two. Incidentally, replacement of the past participle *befangene* by *gebæt* in the on-verse helps to provide double alliteration on /b/, which is mandatory in Type A with anacrusis. Notice also that the plural ending -e (in concord with *ealle (his) gesceafta*) is dropped in *getogen* in the *Meters*; otherwise, the Type A off-verse would have

unacceptable anacrusis (**and eac getōgenē*).

An especially interesting verse in the *Meters* has the preposition *mid* where the prose version uses the inflectional form:

Ʒeah Ʒū Ʒā ealle gesceafta *āne naman* genemde, elle Ʒū nemdest tōgedere and
hēte woruld (Bo 79.32–4)

[Though you gave one name to all the creatures, naming all
together and calling (them) the world]

nemdest eall swā ðeah

× / × /
mid āne nōmān ealle tōgædre
woruld under wolcnum (Met 20.55b–7a)

[however, (you) named all together by one name, the world
under clouds]

Replacement of the inflectional form by a *mid*-phrase is attributable to metrical requirements: the *Meters* poet adds the preposition *mid* to fill out the minimum four metrical positions. Without *mid*, the half-line would result in too short a verse with three metrical positions with *noman* resolved.

Not only does metre affect the choice between inflectional forms and prepositional phrases, but it can also determine the case which a preposition will take. In Old English, some prepositions govern more than one case, most frequently the accusative and dative. The choice between cases is often made on semantic grounds: the accusative denotes ‘motion’ (e.g., *oþ ðæt oþer cōm / gēar in geardas* ‘until another year came to the dwellings’ *Beo* 1133b–4a) while the dative denotes ‘location’ (e.g., *Ðāem eafera wæs / æfter cenned / geong in geardum* ‘To him a young son was later born in the dwellings’ *Beo* 12–13a) although the distinction is often blurred. Consider this passage from the *Seafarer*:

Hwīlum ylfete song
dyde ic mē tō gomene, ganetes hleoþor
ond huilpan swēg fore hleahtor wera,
mæw singende fore medodrince. (Sea 19b–22)

[Sometimes I took the song of the wild swan for my pleasure,
the cry of the gannet, the song of the curlew in place of men’s
laughter, the mew’s singing in place of the mead-drinking.]

Although the two *fore*-phrases above show parallelism, the first *fore* governs the accusative (*hleahtor*) and the second the dative (*medodrince*). In neither instance can any significant difference in the meaning of the preposition be perceived.¹⁰ To solve the discrepancy in case assignment, it has been suggested that *hleahtor* (acc.) be replaced by *hleahtre* (dat.).¹¹ In Old English, however, *fore* ‘in place of’ is often associated with the accusative.

Here metre seems to be responsible for the variable case assignment by *fore*. If we read *medodrince* (acc.) in harmony with the preceding *hleahtor* (acc.), the half-line would result in a verse of unknown type with two successive lifts (with the resolved stress on *medo*) at the end:

× × / /
*fore medodrince

6.4 Principal and Subordinate Clauses

In Old English, some conjunctions and adverbs have identical forms. For instance, *þā* means either ‘when’ or ‘then,’ *nū* ‘now that’ or ‘now,’ and *þær* ‘where’ or ‘there.’ In prose texts, word order is of great help in deciding whether *þā* is an adverb or a conjunction, or to put it another way, in deciding whether a clause is principal or subordinate. As a rule, adverbs are followed by the inverted VS order while a subordinate clause introduced by a conjunction has the SV or S ... V order with the verb in clause-final position. Thus, in the following passage from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* where two *þā*’s are used correlatively, the first serves as a conjunction and the second as an adverb:

S	V	V	S
<i>þā</i> se cyng þæt hierde, <i>þā</i> wende hē hine west wið Exanceastres mid ealre þære fierde			
(<i>ChronA</i> (Bately) 893.38)			

[When the king heard that, then he marched west towards
Exeter with all the army]

In poetry, however, these rules do not work: principal clauses beginning with *þā*, for instance, often take the order SV instead of the ‘normal’ VS:

S	V
<i>Ðā</i> se æðeling giong	
[Then the noble one went]	
(<i>Beo</i> 2715b)	

In the following passage from the *Wife’s Lament*, it is ambiguous whether *þā* should be translated as ‘then’ or ‘when.’ Punctuations and capitalizations (except for the initial *Ðā*) are not supplied in order not to force one of the possible interpretations:

<i>Ðā</i> ic mē fēran gewāt folgað sēcan winelēas wræcca for mīnre wēaþearfe ongunnon þæt þas monnes māgas hycgan þurh dyrne geþōht þæt hȳ tōdælden unc	(<i>Wife</i> 9–12)
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If *ðā* is taken as a conjunction, a comma will be required after *wēaþearfe* ‘woeful need’ in verse 10b with the passage rendered as ‘When because of my woeful need I went wandering, a friendless exile, to seek a position of service, the man’s kinsmen secretly

plotted that they would part us.’ On the other hand, it is also possible to take *þā* as ‘then,’ thereby putting a full stop after verse 10b and starting a new sentence from 11a. According to this reading, the translation of the passage will read: ‘Then because of my woeful need I went wandering, a friendless exile, to seek a position of service. The man’s kinsmen secretly plotted that they would part us.’

EXERCISE: Is *Se* a Demonstrative or a Relative Pronoun?

Se is sometimes ambiguous between a demonstrative pronoun (*sē*) introducing a principal clause and a relative pronoun (*se*) introducing a subordinate clause. Study the following unpunctuated passage from *Beowulf* by consulting two or more editions/translations and note differences in the treatment of *se*:

He ofer willan giong
 tō ðæs ðe hē eorðsele ānne wisse
 hlāw under hrūsan holmwylme nēh
 ȝðgewinne se wæs innan full
 wrætta ond wira

(*Beo* 2409b–13a)

In some cases, metrical analysis can distinguish between principal and subordinate clauses. In clauses containing an auxiliary and a dependent verbal, if the auxiliary precedes the verbal and does not receive rhythmic stress, the clause tends to be principal; if the auxiliary follows the verbal and is rhythmically stressed, the clause tends to be subordinate.¹²

With this rule in mind, consider the following unpunctuated passage from *Beowulf* with 917b scanned:

× × / × /
 Ðā wæs morgenlēoht
 scofen ond scynded ēode scealc monig
 swiðhigende tō sele þām hēan
 searowundor sēon

(*Beo* 917b–20a)

Although *ðā* could be interpreted as an adverb or a conjunction, the auxiliary-verbal order and rhythm would support the former analysis: as the auxiliary *wæs* precedes the verbals (i.e., *scofen* ‘sent

forth' and *scynded* 'hastened') and is unstressed, the clause is more likely to be principal, with a full stop after *scynded* and a new sentence beginning with *Ēode*. Accordingly, the passage is translated as 'Then the morning-light was sent forth and hastened. Many a strong-minded retainer went to the high hall to see the curious wonder.'

6.5 Word Order

6.5.1 How Alliteration Affects Word Order

As we saw briefly in [chapter 1](#), the order of sentence elements is subject to metrical restrictions. In the Germanic tradition, which places importance on genealogy, referring to someone as 'son of someone else' is particularly common (see also [EXERCISE 'Patronymics' in 3.3](#)). In *Beowulf*, Hrothgar, king of the Danes, is referred to as *sunu Healfdenes*, *Healfdenes sunu*, *bearn Healfdenes*, *maga Healfdenes*, etc. Although a word order like *Healfdenes sunu* occurs both in verse and in prose, a reversed order like *sunu Healfdenes* is attested only in poetry. The poetic word order allows for a variety of alliterative possibilities by substitution of synonyms for 'son' in patronymic formulae:

Swā ðā mælceare maga Healfdenes (Beo 189)
[Thus the son of Healfdene (brooded over) the sorrow of the time]

sunu Healfdenes sēcian cwōmon (Beo 268)
[(We) have come to visit the son of Healfdene]

bearn Healfdenes; sē wæs betera ðonne ic (Beo 469)
[the son of Healfdene; he was better than I]

Since the consonant /s/ is one of the most frequently alliterating consonants in Old English poetry, the circumlocution '*sunu* + genitive' would have been particularly useful.

6.5.2 How Rhythm Affects Word Order: Kuhn's Laws

As mentioned in [3.1](#), words in Old English verse can be classified into three categories according to the degree of rhythmic stress they can bear: stress-words, particles, and proclitics. With these classifications in mind, consider the following verse clause, with special reference to the placement of rhythmically unstressed

elements ('Par' and 'Pro' stand for particles and proclitics respectively):

/ /
 Ðē hē ūsic on herge ge-cēas
 Par Par Par Pro Pro-(Par)

/ / / /
 tō ðyssum sīðfate sylfes willum
 Pro Pro

(Beo 2638b–9b)

[For this reason he of his own will chose us from among the army for this expedition]

/ /
 Sorh is mē tō secganne
 Par Par Pro

(Beo 473a)¹³

[(It) is sorrowful for me to say]

As the two verse clauses above show, particles (except for the displaced finite verb (*ge*)*cēas* 'chose') are all grouped together in the first dip either before or after the first lift. Note that proclitics do not have to be collected in the clause-initial dip: in verses 2638b–9b, proclitics (e.g., *ge-*, *tō* 'to', and *ðyssum* 'this') appear in the middle-of-clause dip as well.

★★ The Position of Auxiliaries in a Verse Clause

As they belong to the class of particles, auxiliaries normally appear toward the beginning of a clause. But there is an exception to this rule. While monosyllabic auxiliaries (including not only those which are genuinely monosyllabic like *sceal* 'shall' but also those with resolvable sequences like *mægen* 'may' and those with a prefix like *ongan* 'began') tend to occur in the clause-initial dip, disyllabic auxiliaries (including not only those which are genuinely disyllabic like *scolde* 'should' but also those with a prefix like *onginneð* 'begins') tend to occur later in the clause and receive rhythmic stress as a result of displacement from their normal position toward the clausal beginning.¹⁴ Compare the following two clauses where the verses containing auxiliaries are scanned:

× × / / ×
 Swā *sceal* geong guma gōde gewyrcean,
 fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme

(Beo 20–1)

[In such a way a young man ought to bring (it) about by doing good action, by making splendid costly gifts while in his father's protection]

oð þæt him æghwylc þāra ymbsittendra

/ x / x

ofer hronrāde hȳran scolde,

gomban gylðan.

(*Beo* 9–11a)

[until each of the neighbouring peoples across the whale-road had to obey him]

In addition, there is a tendency to avoid a verse clause that contains only proclitics in the clause-initial dip. The following verse containing a proclitic and a particle in the clause-initial dip is metrically acceptable; the finite verb (*ge*)*lēah* ‘deceived,’ which is dislocated from the clause-initial dip, serves as the second lift of Type B:

x x / x /

him sēo wēn ge-lēah

Par Pro Pro-(Par)

(*Beo* 2323b)₁₅

[this expectation deceived him]

On the other hand, the *Beowulf* poet normally does not resort to Type B verses like the hypothetical one below with an initial dip consisting solely of a proclitic:

x / x x /

*sēo wēn him ge-lēah

Pro

Par

Pro-(Par)

The rhythmic pattern of this verse is acceptable, but the syntax is not.¹⁶ These observations lead to the following two ‘laws,’ generally known as **KUHN’S LAWS** after Hans Kuhn, who formulated them:¹⁷

Kuhn’s First Law: Particles must be placed together in the first dip of a clause (i.e., either before or immediately after the first lift).

Kuhn’s Second Law: At the beginning of a clause, the dip must contain particles; in other words, proclitics alone cannot occupy the clause-initial dip.

EXERCISE: Kuhn's Laws and Textual Criticism

In line 2149 of *Genesis A*, the off-verse lacks alliteration. Krapp-Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, vol. 1) add *selfa* 'self' for the sake of the metre. Note also that *rices* 'of kingdom' is an emendation of the manuscript form *rice*:

Sodoma rice[s]; ac þū [selfa] mōst heonan
hūde lædan, þe ic þē æt hilde geslōh

(*GenA* 2149–50)

[(ancient treasures) of the kingdom of Sodom; but you yourself can take quickly from here what I gained for you in battle]

Is the insertion of *selfa* between two particles (i.e., *þū* 'you' and *mōst* 'must') justified in the light of Kuhn's Laws? If not, can you suggest any alternative reading for 2149b?

While Kuhn's First Law is rather strictly observed in *Beowulf*,¹⁸ there are not a few exceptions to his second law. Among such violations in the epic are those that contain a demonstrative and/or a preposition alone in the clause-initial dip:¹⁹

 / /
þone cwealm ge-wræc
Pro Pro-(Par) (*Beo* 107b)

[(He) avenged the killing]

 / /
Æt þæm ade wæs
Pro Pro (*Beo* 1110a)

[On the pyre was (easily visible)]

In the rest of the poetic corpus, while Kuhn's First Law is generally observed, the second law again admits of quite a few exceptions though the frequency of exceptions varies from poem to poem: *Judith*, for instance, follows the rule very faithfully but in another late poem, the *Battle of Maldon*, breaches often occur.²⁰

★★ Alliterating Finite Verbs in the Clause-initial Position

According to Kuhn's theory, since it stands in the normal position for a particle, the alliterating (*ge*)*feah* 'rejoiced' should not be rhythmically stressed in the following verse where

alliteration on the finite verb is regarded as accidental or ornamental:

/

ne *gefeah* hē þære fæhðe (Beo 109a)

Par Pro-Par Par Pro

[he did not rejoice the feud]

In *Beowulf*, however, there occur instances of alliterating clause-initial finite verbs that must bear rhythmic stress:

/ / / /

Gefēng þā be eaxle — nalas for fæhðe mearn— (Beo 1537)

[(He) then seized (Grendel's mother) by the shoulder—he did not feel anxiety about the hostile deed]

In order to avoid the metrical anomaly (including the breach of the Alliterative Rule of Precedence (see 2.3)), an emendation of *eaxle* 'shoulder' to *feaxe* 'hair' has been proposed so that the on-verse can be scanned with only one lift as Type A3 (

Gefēng þā be feaxe).²¹ Although this emendation looks appealing, the epic shows instances of a finite verb taking alliterative precedence over a noun.²²

6.5.3 Syntactic Classification of Half-lines

Despite the problems and shortcomings of Kuhn's theory, his laws have been widely acknowledged with modifications among scholars of Old English metre and grammar. There have recently been attempts to reinterpret Sievers's basic verse types in the light of Kuhn's theory. According to the first law, which requires particles to be grouped together in the first dip of the clause, the following verse with one or more particles before or immediately after the first lift has to be clause-initial:

/ /

Swā sceal geong guma (Beo 20a)

Par Par

[In such a way a young man ought (to)]

/ /

Bēow was brēme (Beo 18a)

Par

[Beow was renowned]

On the other hand, a verse beginning with one or more proclitics alone may not be clause-initial because the second law forbids the clause-initial dip to contain only proclitics without particles:

/ /
of feorwegum (*Beo* 37a)
Pro
[from distant places]

When a half-line begins with a lift and there are no particle(s) in its first dip, the half-line may appear anywhere in the clause:

/ /
Landweard on-fand <beginning the clause> (*Beo* 1890b)
Pro
[The landguard found (the men's return)]

/ /
bēaga bryttan <occurring in the middle of the clause> (*Beo* 35a)
[the distributor of rings]

/ /
mærne be mæste <occurring at the end of the clause> (*Beo* 36a)
Pro
[the famous one by the mast]

To sum up, on the basis of Kuhn's theory, the following three types of verses can be distinguished in poems like *Beowulf*, which shows relatively strict observance of the second law as well as the first:²³

- (I) clause-initial verse: contains one or more particles before or immediately after the first lift
- (II) clause-non-initial verse: contains proclitics alone at the beginning
- (III) clause-unrestricted verse: begins with the lift without particle(s) in the first dip

Knowledge of such verse classifications must have been very useful for Old English poets to compose in a rapid and extemporaneous way.

The syntactic typologies of half-lines would also seem to require reconsideration of Sievers's five types.²⁴ On syntactic grounds, Sievers's Type A3, for instance, turns out to show a closer affinity to Types B and C than to Types A1 and A2 because Types

A3, B, and C begin with a dip and are ‘clause-initial.’ Furthermore, both of the half-lines below, which are classified as Type B in Sievers’s theory, need to be distinguished syntactically:

$\times \times / \times /$
þær æt hȳðe stōð (Beo 32a)
 Par Pro
 [There at the harbour stood (the ship)]

$\times / \times /$
þurh slīðne nīð (Beo 184a)
 Pro
 [because of dire affliction]

The first instance containing a particle (*þær*) and a proclitic (*æt*) is labelled ‘clause-initial’ whereas the second with a proclitic alone (*þurh*) is ‘clause-non-initial.’ A syntactic distinction is also to be made between the following verses of Type C:

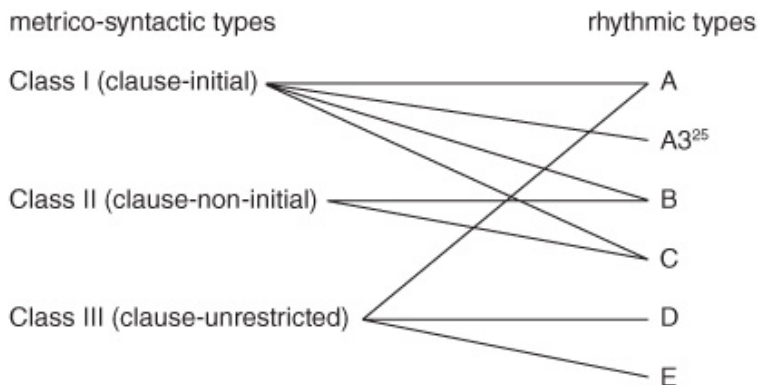
$\times / / \times$
Oft Scyld Scefing (Beo 4a)
 Par
 [Often Scyld Scefing]

$\times / / \times$
in wōrld wōcun (Beo 60a)
 Pro
 [(they) were born into the world]

Verse 4a with a particle at the beginning (*oft*, adv.) is ‘clause-initial’ and verse 60a beginning with a proclitic alone (*in*, prep.) is ‘clause-non-initial.’

Type A verses can be either ‘clause-initial’ with particle(s) in the dip immediately following the initial lift (cf. *Beo* 18a above) or ‘clause-unrestricted’ otherwise (cf. *Beo* 35a, 36a above).

The relationship between metrico-syntactic classifications and Sievers’s five rhythmic types is summarized in the following diagram:



EXERCISE: Kuhn's Laws and Punctuation

In *Beowulf* 1912b–13, many of the editors associate *lyftgeswenced* with the preceding verse, placing a comma after it and interpreting the passage as ‘The ship rushed forward, driven by the wind; (it) rested on shore’:

cēol up geþrang
lyftgeswenced, on lande stōd.

In the light of the metrico-syntactic classifications and Kuhn's Laws (especially his second law), is this reading plausible? If not, suggest an alternative reading and punctuation.

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

Weak Adjectives without a Demonstrative: The use of weak adjectives without a demonstrative has often received attention in studies of poetic archaisms (cf. Lichtenheld 1873; Klaeber 1950: xcvi, n. 4, xcii; Amos 1980; Fulk 2007a).

Weak By-form *Manna*: On the choice between *man(n)* and the weak by-form *manna* on metrical grounds in *Beowulf* and other Old English poetry, see Terasawa (2010).

Negation: On the scarcity of multiple negation in Old English poetry, see Mitchell (1983, 1985: §§ 1609–13). Yoshino (1978)

compares the use of negation in the prose and verse translations of Boethius.

Inflectional Forms vs. Prepositional Phrases: Sato (2002) studies the use of inflectional forms and prepositional phrases (particularly *mid*-phrases) in the prose and verse translations of Boethius, demonstrating that metre affects the choice between the two constructions.

Principal vs. Subordinate Clauses: On the distinction between principal and subordinate clauses that contain an auxiliary and a verbal, see Donoghue (1987b: [chapter 3](#)). Blockley separates conjunctions from adverbs in terms of word order, stating that '[w]ords like *þa* serve as conjunctions when they are clause-initial and immediately followed by some sentence element other than the finite verb' (2001: 219).

Kuhn's Laws: In his article published in 1933, Kuhn formulated his two laws concerning the placement of unstressed elements in Old English verse clauses. A comprehensive summary of these laws is found in Campbell (1970: 94). Kuhn's Laws have often been challenged and modified: Mitchell (1985: § 3947) notices the dangers of circular argument in Kuhn's theory; Russom (1996) attempts to explain Kuhn's Laws with reference to his word-foot theory; Momma (1997), who reexamines the laws on the basis of a more extensive corpus, relaxes Kuhn's First Law while eliminating his second law. Donoghue (1997: 69–75) demonstrates the validity of Kuhn's First Law. Mines (2002) tests the validity of the second law with reference to eighteen poems (excluding *Beowulf*). For further criticism of Kuhn's theory, see Cosmos (1976–7), Hutcheson (1992b), and Blockley and Cable (1995). For proposed repunctuations and emendations in the light of Kuhn's Laws, see Lucas (1985), Donoghue (1987b: Appendix 2), and Momma (1997: 64).

Verse-initial Alliterating Verbs: In scanning verse-initial alliterating verbs, some scholars who value Kuhn's Laws regard alliteration as nonfunctional/ornamental. They would not assign rhythmic stress to verbs like *gewāt* in *Gewāt þā ofer wāgholm* '(it) set off across the surging sea' (*Beo* 217a): cf. Bliss (1967: § 20) and Kendall (1983: 7–9; 1991: 22–4). Other scholars treat alliterating finite verbs as rhythmically stressed. See Lehmann and Tabusa (1958: 5–7) and more recently Hutcheson (1992b: 134–6). Momma (1996) takes a middle-of-the-road line.

Metrico-syntactic Classification of Half-lines: For the classification of half-lines into 'clause-initial,' 'clause-non-initial,' and 'unrestricted,' see Kendall (1983, 1991). For criticism of Kendall's metrical grammar, see Lucas (1987). On the basis of the fact that A3 verses very often open a clause, a sentence, a speech, or a numbered section, Stanley (1992: 271–84) proposes several repunctuations in the text of *Beowulf*, although with 'a word of caution.'

7 Other Problems Related to Old English Metre

Overview

In the preceding chapters we have considered Old English metre and its relevance to lexical and grammatical choice in poetry. This chapter will explore other interesting questions relevant to Old English metre, concerning whether metrical evidence could provide clues to the dating of texts, authorship, and the distinction between verse and prose. Since some of these issues are still matters of great controversy, I shall try to maintain as proper a balance as possible among different views and theories, some of which are also referred to in ‘References and Suggestions for Further Reading’ at the end of the chapter.

7.1 Metre and the Dating of Texts

Most Old English literary texts have come down to us through manuscripts of the late tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries. A poem like *Cædmon’s Hymn*, which survives in some twenty manuscripts from the eighth century to the fifteenth, however, was composed earlier—probably as early as the late seventh century—than it was copied in the manuscripts. In a *Chronicle* poem like the *Death of Edgar* (AD 975), the composition date would be closer to the dates of the three manuscripts containing the text. But due to the paucity of external evidence—contemporary references to authors and times of composition—most of the extant verse texts are quite difficult to date. Accordingly, some Old English scholars have vigorously attempted to date the poetry by metrical as well as phonological, grammatical, lexical, or stylistic evidence. Note also that the problem of dating Old English verse texts is closely tied up with that of their dialect: West Saxon traits show lateness (i.e., late ninth or tenth century) whereas Anglian traits point to an earlier date.

One of the metrical criteria for dating is concerned with alliteration between velar *g* and palatal *g* (represented as *ġ*). In Old

English poetry, as we saw in 2.1, the two different g's often alliterate with each other:

Hwæt, wē Gār-Dena in geārdagum (Beo 1)
[Lo! We (have heard of the glory) of Spear-Danes in days of yore]

on þām gearwum þe his gāst onfeng (GenA 1212)
[in the clothing that his spirit received]

gearwe tō gūðe. Gāras līxtan (El 23)
[(they were) ready for the battle. Spears shone]

gēomor hweorfan. Þām bið gomenes wana (GuthB 1354)
[(he must) roam miserably. (There) is a lack of joy for him]

The late poem *Battle of Maldon* (composed after AD 991) avoids alliterating between velar and palatal g since the two g's would have been phonologically distinct at the time of composition. In this poem, velar g alliterates with velar g and palatal g with palatal g.¹ Consider now the following apparent exceptions in *Maldon* where two different g's alliterate with each other:

þæt gē þisne gāræs mid gāfole forgyldon (Mald 32)
[(it will be better) that you should buy off this spear-attack with tribute]

Þær ongēan gramum gearowe stōdon (Mald 100)
[There against the enemies, (they) stood ready]

Godrine and Godwīg, gūþe ne gūmdon (Mald 192)
[Godwine(?) and Godwig (ran away), (they) did not care for the battle]

Since the second lift of the off-verse usually cannot take part in alliteration, however, systematic alliteration should fall only on the velar g's: *gāræs* and *gāfole* in verse 32 and *Godrine*, *Godwīg*, and *gūþe* in verse 192. In verse 100, as the second lift of the on-verse does not have to take part in alliteration, palatal g of *(on)gēan* and *gearowe* may be assumed to alliterate.² It is safe to conclude that palatal and velar g do not alliterate with each other in *Maldon*. The tendency to avoid alliterating two different g's can also be observed in other late poems like the *Judgement Day II*, the *Chronicle* poems (perhaps including *Brunanburh*, which has no unambiguous case of the two sounds alliterating),³ and the *Menologium*.

EXERCISE: The ‘G’ Test for Dating

In *Judith*, which is considered to be a late composition (i.e., late ninth or tenth century), do velar and palatal g alliterate? Skim through the poem and find relevant instances. Do your findings affect the validity of the ‘g’ test for dating?

In 4.2.1, we saw that earlier uncontracted forms such as *hēahan* for *hēan* ‘high’ are to be posited for metrical reasons in some Old English poems. If a verse text primarily exhibits uncontracted or contracted forms, we might assume that it could be dated earlier or later. In *Genesis A*, considered one of the earliest Old English poems, occurrences of uncontracted forms with intervocalic *h* overwhelm those of contracted forms (twenty-three uncontracted vs. five contracted) while the later Cynewulfian poems contain almost exclusively contracted forms.⁴

Parasiting can also be used as a metrical criterion for dating. In *Genesis A*, the use of earlier forms without parasiting is slightly more frequent than the use of later forms with parasiting, whereas the Cynewulf canon shows predominant use of parasitic forms with only one nonparasiting form.⁵ However, the ‘parasiting’ test sometimes contradicts the ‘contraction’ test: the former indicates that *Beowulf*, which has far more metrically attested forms without parasiting, should have been composed earlier than *Genesis A*; the latter, on the other hand, shows that *Genesis A*, with its predominant use of uncontracted forms, should be older than *Beowulf*, which prefers contracted forms.⁶ Thus, the choice between earlier and later metrical forms could be due to the poets’ individual styles rather than chronological factors.

Earlier linguistic forms are not infrequently attested in late Old English poems. Consider the following verse from the *Battle of Maldon*:

wæpen ūp āhōf
[(he) raised up his weapon]

(*Mald* 130b)

Although it was spelled out, a parasitic vowel must be metrically ignored and the half-line is scanned as Type D2 (

wāpen ūp āhōf). The Type D*2 analysis (*wāpen^x ūp^x āhōf*) is less likely since the expanded type usually requires double alliteration, restricted to the on-verse. The *Maldon* poet would have had earlier nonparasiting forms as metrical variants at his disposal even after they were no longer part of his own language. Earlier linguistic features could be preserved in the language of poetry not only through poetic formulae but also by analogical formations on the model of inflected cases (e.g., *wāpna*). Thus it is advisable to keep in mind that occurrences of archaic forms without parasiting do not necessarily point to early composition of the poetic text where the relevant forms appear. The same caution must be applied when using contraction as a criterion for dating the poetry.

7.2 Metre and Authorship

One difficulty in dating Old English verse texts is the fact that most are anonymous. Indeed, identifying the authorship of the texts as well as the dating has been a major focus of the studies of Old English poetry. Among others, the problem of the Cynewulf canon has always attracted scholarly attention. At one time, a large amount of Old English poetry was ascribed to this poet, but more recently, Cynewulf has been considered the author only of *Elene*, *Juliana*, *Christ B*, and the *Fates of the Apostles*, each of which contains his runic signature toward the end.

If they are composed by a single author (perhaps Cynewulf), the four signed poems must show some linguistic similarities (including metrical practice) unless the author changed his style during his career. As we saw in 6.5.2, while Kuhn's First Law is strictly observed in the extant Old English verse corpus, adherence to his second law varies from one poem to another. Among Old English poems, *Elene*, *Juliana*, and *Christ B* are the ones that most strictly observe the second law, which might indicate single authorship of the three.⁷ (The *Fates of the Apostles* will be excluded in the following discussion of Cynewulf authorship, as it is too short to provide a sufficient number of relevant instances.)

In 6.4, we observed that in principal clauses containing an auxiliary (v) and a verbal (V), the former tends to precede the latter without receiving rhythmic stress whereas in subordinate

clauses, the rhythmically stressed auxiliary tends to follow the verbal. *Christ B* shows a high proportion of the order vV in principal clauses but *Elene* and *Juliana* employ $\acute{V}V$ as frequently as vV.⁸ In subordinate clauses, on the other hand, the three signed poems adhere to the rule to different degrees, as the following table indicates:⁹

	vV	$\acute{V}V$	V $\acute{V}$
Elene	4%	27%	70%
Christ B	8%	39%	54%
Juliana	2%	47%	51%

EXERCISE: Cynewulf’s Signed Poems

Linguistic discrepancies among the signed poems described above might disprove common authorship, but can you think of any other way to account for the differences?

Tests for auxiliaries and verbals may disclose something interesting about the authorship of *Solomon and Saturn*, the two parts of which have generally been ascribed to two different poets (lines 1–169 and lines 179–506).¹⁰ Both parts of the poem, however, show anomalies in the behaviour of the auxiliary.¹¹ Unlike other Old English verse texts, they do not discriminate between principal and subordinate clauses with respect to auxiliary-verbal order: the two parts show as low a proportion of $\acute{V}V$ in subordinate clauses as in principal clauses, and such a trait is not attested in any other poem. The metrico-grammatical peculiarities shared by the two parts of *Solomon and Saturn* could suggest that they were composed by the same poet.

Since the test of the auxiliary and verbal is only one of the linguistic criteria in establishing authorship, further support in the form of lexical, stylistic, and literary evidence should be amassed. It would also be interesting to pursue the problem of authorship in other Old English verse texts, such as *Guthlac*, the second part of which might be attributable to Cynewulf while the first is more probably non-Cynewulfian.¹²

7.3 Verse and Prose

According to McIntosh, the following five stylistic genres are discernible in Old English literature:¹³

1. Classical verse
2. Late debased verse
3. Ælfric's style in his *Lives of Saints*
4. Wulfstan's style
5. Ordinary prose

The classical verse category refers to those poems that, for the most part, obey the rules of Sievers whereas the late 'debased' verse shows various metrical anomalies proscribed in the classical poetry. In late verse, for instance, half-lines are occasionally connected by rhyme and alliteration or by rhyme alone; alliteration falls on the second lift of the off-verse; half-lines often fail to conform to Sievers's rhythmic types; and the use of Types D and E is in decline. Late poems like the *Paris Psalter* make relatively little use of traditional poetic diction, with few poetic compounds, kennings, or formulae.

EXERCISE: Metrical Anomalies in the Late Poetry

Read the following passage from a *Chronicle* poem, the *Death of Alfred* (labelled as a debased poem by McIntosh), which describes the murder of Prince Alfred, son of Æthelred, at the hands of Earl Godwine in the year 1036. List metrical anomalies that would not occur in a classical poem like *Beowulf*:

Ac Godwine hine þā gelette and hine on hæft sette,
and his gefēran hē tōdrāf, and sume mislice ofsloh;
sume hī man wið fēo sealde, sume hrēowlice æcwealde,
sume hī man bende, sume hī man blende,
sume hamelode, sume hættode.
Ne wearð drēorlicre dæd gedōn on þison earde,
syþþan Dene cōmon and hēr frið namon.

(*DAlf* 6–12)

[But then Godwine prevented him, and put him in captivity, and he dispersed his followers, and killed some in various ways; some of them were sold for money,

some cruelly killed, some of them were fettered, some of them were blinded, some hamstringed, some scalped. No crueller deed was done in this country after the Danes came, and made peace here.]

Ælfric's style is known as rhythmical prose, which shares both alliteration and long-line structure with the poetry. In the following passage on the death of St Oswald, each 'on-verse' is linked with the 'off-verse' by alliteration:¹⁴

Æfter ðan ðe Augustīnus tō Engla lande becōm
wæs sum æðel(e) cyning, Ōswold gehāten,
on Norðhymbra lande, gelyfed swýþe on God.

(Oswald 1-3)

[After Augustine came to England, there was a noble king called Oswald in the land of Northumbria, having much faith in God.] Ælfric's rhythmical prose, however, differs from the poetry in that unstressed syllables occur more freely, making his half-line longer than the classical half-line. In *Beowulf*, as mentioned in 5.1, the average length of a half-line is slightly less than 5 syllables, which is also the case with the late *Maldon*. In rhythmical prose, on the other hand, a 'half-line' consists of 7 syllables on average. This also explains Ælfric's preference for half-lines beginning with a preposition to yield an extra unstressed syllable, as in *mid lýtum werode* 'with a small troop' (*Oswald* 15a), *mid welwillend(um) mōde* 'with benevolent mind' (*Oswald* 59b), *mid blīpum mōde* 'with blithe mind' (*Oswald* 66b), and the like. In verse, inflectional forms often occur instead of prepositional phrases, as in *lýtle werede* (*GenA* 2093b), *blīðe mōde* (*PPs* 89.18.3b). See 6.3 above.

Like late ‘debased’ verse, Ælfric’s rhythmical prose allows alliterative anomalies, such as an alliterating second lift in the off-verse, alliterative precedence of second compound elements to first ones, and alliteration between the consonant clusters *sc-/sp-/st-* and the single consonant *s-*, represented respectively in the three instances below:

Nū hæfð hē þone wurðmynt on þære ēcan worulde
[Now he has honour in the eternal world]

(Oswald 277)

/ / / /

Sende ðā tō Scotlande, þær se geleafa wæs ðā (Oswald 48)
 [(He) then sent to Scotland, where (there) was the faith then]

/ / / /

embe his sǣwle þearfa oððe his Scyppendes beboda (Oswald 244)
 [(he hardly thought) about the needs of his soul or his Creator's commands]

In addition to these non-classical features, Ælfric's rhythmical prose contains few poetic compounds, kennings, or formulae.

Wulfstan's rhythmical prose employs a two-stress-phrase structure resembling the rhythm of the classical half-line. To illustrate Wulfstan's rhythmic pattern, a passage from the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* is conveniently divided into two-stress-phrase units:¹⁵

/ /

Ne dohte hit nū lange

/ /

inne ne ūte

/ /

ac wæs here and hunger

/ /

bryne and blōdgyte

/ /

on gewelhwylcan ende

/ /

oft and gelōme

/ /

and ūs stalu and cwalu

/ /

strīc and steorfa

/ /

orfcwealm and uncoðu

/ /

hōl and hete

/ /

and rȳpera rēaflāc

/ /

dereðe swiðe þearle (WHom 20.1 50–3, arranged into two-stress phrase-units)

[Nothing has prospered now for a long time here or elsewhere but (there) has been war and famine, burning and bloodshed in every region often and again; and stealing and killing, plague and pestilence, cattle-plague and disease, slander and hostility, and plunder by robbers have damaged us very severely]

The two-stress phrases are often linked by alliteration (e.g., lines 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11) and occasionally by rhyme (e.g., line 7).

Alliteration does not, however, normally extend beyond the two-stress phrases to form a long line. Finally, ordinary prose includes Alfredian prose, most of the *Chronicle*, and most of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, where both alliterative and rhythmic systems are lacking.

The first two genres (i.e., classical verse and late debased verse) are generally regarded as verse appropriate for inclusion in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*. However, as already noted, Ælfric's rhythmical prose shares important features with poetry, such as a long-line structure with two half-lines linked by alliteration. In particular, as we have seen above, there are quite a few resemblances between Ælfric's rhythmical prose and late 'debased' verse. Sometimes, Ælfric was even more conservative in his 'versification' than late Old English poets; while the poet of the *Death of Alfred* (see EXERCISE 'Metrical Anomalies in the Late Poetry' above) used rhyme as well as alliteration, Ælfric generally avoided using rhyme to link half-lines. This has led some scholars to expand the boundary of Old English poetry so as to incorporate Ælfric's rhythmical prose.¹⁶

Drawing the line between poetry and prose is not only a matter of including or excluding 'verselike' prose but also of reexamining the 'authorized' poetic corpus. We have tacitly assumed that the verse texts included in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (hereafter abbreviated as *ASPR*) define the poetic corpus. This is, however, not the case. The *Death of Alfred*, a *Chronicle* poem with striking metrical anomalies, is included in the *ASPR* not because of its metrical form but simply 'following the practice of earlier editors.'¹⁷ In addition to the six poems printed in the *ASPR*, other passages in the *Chronicles* are often identified as poetry.¹⁸ In particular, the variant version of the *Death of Edgar* in MS Cotton Tiberius B. iv (D) and MS Laud Misc. 636 (E), although excluded from the *ASPR*, has often been regarded as verse:¹⁹

x / x x / / x / x
Hēr Eadgar gefōr, Angla reccend,
/ \ x x / x / x / \ x
Westseaxena wine, and Myrcna mundbora.

/ x x / x x / / x
 Cūð was þæt wīde geond feola þēoda,

x / x / \ x x x / x /
 þæt afaren Eadmundes ofer gā[n]e[t]es beð
 / x x x / x / x x / x
 cýnegas hyne wīde wurdodon swīde,
 x x x x / x x x x x / x
 bugon tō þām cýninge swā him was gecynde.
 x x / x / x x / x /
 Næs <se> flōta swā rang ne se hēre swā strang
 x x / x / x x x / x
 þæt on Angelcynne æs him gefætte,
 x x x x x / x / / \ x / x
 þā hwīle þe se æþela cýning cýnēstōl gerehte

(*The Death of Edgar*, variant version)

[In this year Edgar passed away, ruler of the English, friend of the West-Saxons, and protector of the Mercians. That was widely known throughout many nations, so that kings widely and greatly honoured the son of Edmund over the gannet's bath (and) bowed to the king as was proper to him. No fleet was proud, no army strong enough to fetch booty for itself in England while the noble king held the throne]

This poem does not seem to be metrically ‘inferior’ to late poems in the *ASPR*. Metrically, most of the half-lines fit into Sievers’s basic types, Type A verses being the most common (e.g., 1b, 3a, 5a, 5b, 8a, 8b). There are no verses with less than three syllables or with a verse-final dip of more than one syllable. Half-lines are linked by alliteration, though there are some anomalous lines: in the on- and off-verse of line 2 alliteration occurs within the half-lines but not across; in 5a, only the second lift participates in alliteration whereas in 6b with the first lift suppressed the ‘second’ lift alliterates. Metrical irregularities of these sorts do occur in late poetry, however. Furthermore, as rhyme links the half-lines only once (between *rang* and *strang* in line 7), the poet of the *Death of Edgar* (variant version) seems to be more sparing in the use of rhyme than the poet of the *Death of Alfred*. The prosaic phrase *þā hwīle þe* occurs in the last line of this work, but the same phrase is attested in *Maldon* (see 5.1).

Although the present book has dealt primarily with metrical practices in so-called classical Old English poetry, the late literary works (whether they are labelled verse or prose) show relaxation

of the metrical rules to such different degrees that it would hardly be possible to find criteria that distinguish some as poetry and others as prose. Instead, the metrical rules we have studied can help to measure ‘distance’ (a better term than ‘deviation’) from the ‘classical’ tradition.

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

Metre and Dating: Amos (1980) examines the validity of various linguistic tests for determining the date of poetry, concluding that ‘[o]f the chronological tests for dating Old English poetry discussed in this monograph, very few have the reliability associated with the great *Lautgesetze*’ (167). Chase (1981) is a collection of important papers discussing the date of *Beowulf* from multiple viewpoints without reaching a consensus. On papers in the collection more or less related to metre, see Cable (1981), Pope (1981), and Stanley (1981). More recently, Liuzza (1995) questions the use of metrical evidence for dating, stating that ‘[i]f poems were composed lexically rather than metrically—by improvising on the common stock of traditional collocations, remembered expressions, and accepted formulae with only secondary attention to the rules discerned by modern descriptive metre—then any notion of dating based on these patterns must be questionable’ (287).

Fulk (1989, 1992, 2007b) goes against the stream by attempting to set a fairly reliable terminus ad quem for *Beowulf*, which adhered relatively well to Kaluza’s Law in a strict sense (see 4.2.4). ‘*Beowulf* would then seem to have been composed,’ he concludes, ‘at a time when these etymologically short endings were still distinctly differentiated from long ones, and that would imply a date of composition no later than about AD 725 if the poem is not Northumbrian in origin, otherwise no later than about AD 825’ (Fulk 2007b: 319). Fulk’s theory has been supported by Clemoes (1995) on cultural evidence, by Lapidge (2000) on palaeographic evidence, and Cronan (2004) on lexical evidence. For those scholars who challenge Fulk’s view, see Huthcheson (2004) and Frank (2007), among others. Fulk (2007b) responds to Huthcheson’s criticism.

For dating of the other Old English poetry (especially the Cynewulf canon), see Conner (2001) and Fulk (2001).

Metre and Authorship: On the use of Kuhn's Second Law for determining the Cynewulf canon, see Momma (1997: 73, 188). In his conclusion, Donoghue (1987b: 104–16) discusses the problem of authorship with reference to *Solomon and Saturn* and the Cynewulf signed poems. By examining the use of contracted and uncontracted negative forms in the signed poems, Terasawa (2005) supports Donoghue's view that *Christ B* and the *Fates of the Apostles* might not be attributable to Cynewulf. Fulk (2001: 9), on the other hand, argues for the homogeneity of the four poems bearing Cynewulf's runic signatures.

Verse and Prose: For the five genres in Old English literature, see McIntosh (1949). On the basis of nine metrical criteria, Grinda (1984) classifies verse texts according to the scale of metrical/stylistic strictness, ranging from *Beowulf* and *Exodus* at the top to the *Meters of Boethius*, the *Paris Psalter*, *Christ and Satan*, or the *Battle of Maldon* at the bottom.

The question as to whether Ælfric's alliterative-rhythmical works are verse or prose has provoked much controversy. Pope regards them rather as 'a mildly ornamental, rhythmically ordered prose than as a debased, pedestrian poetry' (1967–8, I: 105). Mitchell states that 'Ælfric's alliterative prose, though or because it lacks the alliteration and rhythm of poetry, is good prose' (2005: 359). Russom (1987: 133–44) observes minute metrical differences between *Beowulf* and Ælfric's homily on St Oswald, the latter of which provides no example of a half-line structure common in *Beowulf*, i.e., a Type A verse consisting of two trochaic words. Momma (1997) argues that her syntactic rules (her revised version of Kuhn's Laws) could objectively differentiate between verse included in the *ASPR* and Ælfric's rhythmical prose, the former of which observes the rules but not the latter (although she does not demonstrate that Ælfric's rhythmical works neglect the laws). See also Fulk (2004).

On the other hand, some scholars expand the boundary of Old English poetry so as to incorporate Ælfric's rhythmical prose. See also Kuhn (1973) and Bredehoft (2004a).

On the basis of lexical as well as metrical evidence, Stanley (1985) identifies verse passages in the prose homily from Corpus Christi College Cambridge, MS 201, to which he gives the title 'the Judgement of the Damned.' Scragg (1992), however, regards the passages not as 'a poem incorporated into the homily' but rather as

‘a feature of the homilist’s own style’ (51).

Bredehoft (2004b) shows that ‘irregular’ poems (including those excluded from the *ASPR*) are often differentiated in manuscript from surrounding prose in terms of punctuation, spacing, and capitalization, providing ‘a broader, more inclusive canon of Old English verse than that of the *ASPR*’ (143).

Appendix A Suggested Answers to the Exercises

Chapter 1

EXERCISE: Alliterative Patterns

Examples 2 and 4 show acceptable patterns of alliteration whereas examples 1 (only the second lift alliterating in the on-verse), 3 (only the second lift alliterating in the off-verse), and 5 (double alliteration in the off-verse) are metrically anomalous.

EXERCISE: The Four-syllable Principle and Word-choice

With the shorter *gēn*, the half-line would result in a verse of three syllables, which is too short: **fremmað gēn*. For further discussions of choice between morphological variants, see [5.2.1](#).

Chapter 2

EXERCISE: Consonantal and Vocalic Alliteration

Alliterating letters are in bold:

- 1) ġeongum gārwigan gēoce gefremman
- 2) cūpe næssas; cēol up geþrang
- 3) stōd on **st**apole, geseah **st**ēapne hrōf
- 4) idese tō efnanne, þēah ðe hīo ænlicu sȳ
- 5) Ārīs, rīces weard, uton hraðe fēran

EXERCISE: To Emend or Not to Emend

Although substitution of synonymous *ābrēat* ‘killed’ for *ofslōh* has been proposed (cf. Holthausen 1905: 114), most scholars have chosen to follow the manuscript reading without accepting such a drastic conjecture.

EXERCISE: Breaches of the Alliterative Rules

- 1) Violating the Alliterative Rule of Precedence

- 2) Only the second lift alliterating in the off-verse / Violating the Alliterative Rule of Precedence
- 3) Only the second lift alliterating in the off-verse (note that the past participle *hāten* serves as the first lift)
- 4) Violating the principle of Left Dominance (note that the past participle, i.e., *tōbrocen* is of the same metrical importance as the noun, i.e., *scyldburi*)
- 5) Violating the principle of Left Dominance

Chapter 3

EXERCISE: Identifying Rhythmic Stress

- 1) *geongum ond ealdum swylc him God sealde* (note that *sealde*, the finite verb, is a particle displaced from clause-initial position and receives rhythmic stress)
- 2) *sē þe his wordes gewæld wīde hæfde* (note that *hæfde* receives rhythmic stress as a particle displaced from clause-initial position)
- 3) *ēce drihten, þæs þe hē Ābel slōg* (*slōg* receives rhythmic stress as a displaced particle)
- 4) *þā wæs æfter wiste wōp up āhafen* (note that the on-verse has only one rhythmic stress)
- 5) *mære þeoden mondrēamum from* (note that *from* receives rhythmic stress as a preposition (proclitic) displaced from its normal position before the noun)

EXERCISE: Patronymics

In *Beowulf*, trisyllabic names in the genitive like *Ecglāfes*, *Healfdenes*, and *Wihstānes* form a half-line with monosyllabic *bearn*, *maga* (resolved), *mago* (resolved), and *sunu* (resolved): *Ecglāfes bearn* (499b), *mago Ecglāfes* (1465b), *sunu Ecglāfes* (1808a), *bearn Healfdenes* (469a), *maga Healfdenes* (189b, etc), *mago Healfdenes* (1867a, 2011b), *sunu Healfdenes* (268a, etc), *Healfdenes sunu* (1009b), *Wihstānes sunu* (3076b), *sunu Wihstānes* (3120b). Note that some metrically possible combinations (e.g., *maga Wihstānes*, *Wihstānes bearn*) are not attested, perhaps for non-metrical reasons. On the other hand, disyllabic names in the genitive like *Scyldes* and *Wælses* can be combined with disyllabic *eafera*

(resolved), e.g., *Wælses eafera* (897a) and *Scyldes eafera* (19a), but not with monosyllabic *bearn*, *maga* (resolved), *mago* (resolved), and *sunu* (resolved).

EXERCISE: Identifying Rhythmic Types

Rhythmic types are given in round brackets after the half-lines:

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} x & x & / & | & / & x & x & / & | & / & x \\ \text{Hwæt, wē Gār-Dena (C)} & \text{in geārdagum, (C)} \\ / & | & / & \backslash & x & / & x & | & / & x \\ \text{þēodcýninga (D1)} & \text{þrym gefrūnon, (A1)} \\ x & x & / & | & / & x & / & x & | & / & x \\ \text{hū ðā æþelingas (C)} & \text{ellen fremēdon. (A1)} \\ x & / & | & / & x & / & x & | & / & x \\ \text{Oft Scyld Scēfing (C)} & \text{sceaþena þrēatum, (A1)} \\ / & x & | & / & x & / & \backslash & x & x & | & / \\ \text{mōnēgum mægþum (A1)} & \text{meoðoſetla oftēah, (E)} \\ / & x & x & | & / & x & x & x & / & | & x & / \\ \text{egsode eorlas, (A1)} & \text{syððan ærest wearð (B)} \\ / & \backslash & | & / & x & x & x & / & | & x & x & / \\ \text{fēasceaft funden. (A2)} & \text{Hē þæs frōfre gebād: (B)} \\ / & x & x & | & / & x & / & \backslash & x & | & / \\ \text{wēox under wolcnum, (A1)} & \text{weorðmyndum þāh, (E)} \\ x & x & x & | & / & x & x & x & | & / & | & \backslash & x \\ \text{oð þæt him æghwylc (A3)} & \text{þāra ymbſittendra (D1 with anacrusis)} \\ x & x & / & | & / & x & / & x & | & / & x \\ \text{ofer hronrāde (C)} & \text{hȳran scolde, (A1)} \\ / & x & | & / & x & x & x & / & | & / & x \\ \text{gomban gylðan. (A1)} & \text{Þæt wæs gōd cyning. (C)} \end{array}$

Note: In verse 9b, *þāra* is often omitted since the off-verse (of Type D) normally forbids anacrusis. See, for instance, Klaeber (3rd ed., 1950) and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008), the latter of which underdot and ignore *þāra*. The metrical classification of all the verses in *Beowulf* is made in Pope (1966), Bliss (1967, 1995), Kendall (1991), and Suzuki (1996a) according to their own systems. Vickman's scansion is based on Bliss's theory (cf. Vickman 1990).

EXERCISE: Hypermetric Verses

/ x x x | / x | / x x x x x | / x x | / x
 swætan on þā swiðran healfe. Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrēfed,
 / x x x x x | / x x | / x x x x x | / x | / x
 forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe. Geseah ic þæt fūse bēacen
 / x | / x x | / x x x x x | / x x | / x
 wendan wædum ond blēom; hwīlum hit wæs mid wætan bestēmed,
 x | / x | / x | / x x x x | / x x | / x
 beswyled mid swātes gange, hwīlum mid since gegyrwed.

Chapter 4

EXERCISE: Half-lines of Three or Fewer Syllables

Listed below are the readings of verses 1404b, 2139a, and 2488a in the major editions of *Beowulf* published after 1950. ‘MS.’ indicates that the editions retain the manuscript readings:

	Klaeber (1950)	ASPR, vol. 4 (1953)	Heyne-von Schaubert (1963)	Magoun (1966)	Nickel (1976–82)
gegnum för (1404b)	[swā] gegnum för	[þær hēo] gegnum för	MS.	[swā] gegnum för	MS.
in ðām sele (2139a)	in ðām [gūð]sele	in ðām [gūð]sele	in ðām [gūð]sele	on þæm [gūþ]sele	in ðām [gūð]sele
hrēas blāc (2488a)	hrēas [heoro]blāc	hrēas [hilde]blāc	hrēas [hilde]blāc	hræ[w]blāc [gchrēas]	hrēas [heoro]blāc
	Chickering (1977)	Crépin (1991)	Jack (1994)	Wrenn- Bolton (1996)	Swanton (1997)
gegnum för (1404b)	MS.	MS.	[swā] gegnum för	MS.	[þær hēo] gegnum för
in ðām sele (2139a)	in ðām [gūð]sele	MS.	in ðām [gūð]sele	in ðām [gūð]sele	in ðām [gūð]sele
hrēas blāc (2488a)	hrēas [heoro]blāc	MS.	hrēas [hilde]blāc	hrēas [heoro]blāc	hrēas [heoro]blāc

	Trask (1997)	Alexander (2000)	Slade (2002–3)	Kiernan (2004)	Mitchell- Robinson (2006)
gegnum för (1404b)	gegnum f[e]r[de]	MS.	MS.	MS.	[pæ̃r] gegnum för
in ðām sele (2139a)	in ðām [gūð]sele	in ðām [gūð]sele	in ðām [grund]sele	in ðām [grund]s(ele)	in ðām [grund]sele
hrēas blāc (2488a)	hrēas [hilde] blāc	hrēas [heoro]blāc	hrēas [heaþo]blāc	hrēas [heaþo]blāc	hrēas [heoro]blāc

Fulk, Bjork, & Niles (2008)

gegnum för (1404b)	[pæ̃r] gegnum för
in ðām sele (2139a)	in ðām [gūð]sele
hrēas blāc (2488a)	hrēas [hilde]blāc

EXERCISE: Contraction, Parasiting, and Syncopation

- 1) $\text{man } \text{geb} \times \text{e} \times \text{on}$ Type A1 (Expand the contracted *-þēon*.)
 $\times \quad \times \quad \times \quad / \quad / \quad \times$
- 2) *cwæð þæt se ælmihtiga* Type C (Ignore the syncopatable vowel in *ælmihtiga*.)
 $/ \quad \times \quad / \quad \times$
- 3) *ōþres dōgores* Type A1 (Ignore the syncopatable vowel in *dōgores*.)
 $/ \quad \backslash \quad \times \quad /$
- 4) *wælfagne winter* Type E (Assume the nonparasiting form in *winter*.)
 $/ \quad \quad \backslash \quad / \times$
- 5) *morþorbed strēd* Type A2 (Assume the nonparasiting form in *morþor-* and expand the contracted form *strēd*.)

Chapter 5

EXERCISE: *þendan* vs. *þā hwile (þe)*

The marginal gloss would suggest that the corrector himself was not familiar with the archaic *ðenden* or might have thought the audience would not recognize it. Note that *ðenden* occurs only seven times in prose (against some seventy-five times in verse). See Mitchell (1969: 71; 1985: §§ 2629, 2634–5).

EXERCISE: *Gīeta* vs. *Gīet*

In example 2, the use of the monosyllabic *gīet* would produce an unmetrical verse of only three syllables (**næs þā gīet*) whereas in the other half-lines the replacement of the disyllabic form by the monosyllabic would result in unscannable verses (**sumne þā gēt*, **āwēr þā gēt*, *Wē sculon ðeah gūt*, **ðeah ðū hī nū gēt*). It is interesting to note here that in each of the passages of the *Prose Boethius* corresponding to the *Meters* (except example 1) monosyllabic forms occur instead of disyllabic variants (cf. *Bo* 33.25 *gūt*; *Bo* 34.3 *gēt*; *Bo* 101.22 *gēt*; *Bo* 105.21 *gēot*). Except for two instances (cf. *GenA* 155b, *Dream* 28b), the other verse instances of *gīeta* are also found in metrical contexts where the shorter form would be unacceptable (cf. *GenA* 116b, 993b, 1453a, 1635b, 2468b; *Brun* 66b).

EXERCISE: Harpers in Old English Literature

The *Beowulf* poet often refers to the music of a harp but never mentions its player. The word *hearpere* ‘harper’ is not only absent from *Beowulf* but also from other verse texts, with the exception of *Psalms* 50 4, where this derivative is used for David. Old English prose writers show no hesitation about using *hearpere* and provide twenty-four instances. In the *Prose Boethius*, each of seven occurrences of *hearpere* is used for Orpheus, the great mythical musician. Since the story of Orpheus is left out in the *Meters of Boethius*, we cannot tell whether the versifier would have used this word for this legendary harper.

EXERCISE: Restoring *Beowulf* 3153a

Klaeber (3rd ed., 1950) restores *hearm-dagas* ‘evil-days,’ but this reading does not account for a letter *g* preceding *gas* with an intervening space, which Kiernan (2004) claims to see in the manuscript. This emendation is adopted by Trask (1997). Klaeber also suggests that the reading *hefige dagas* ‘grievous days’ is possible (1950: 459). Nickel (1976–82), Crépin (1991), Jack (1994), Wrenn-Bolton (1996), and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008) follow Mackie (1941) and adopt *here-geongas* or *here-gangas* ‘invasions.’ Krapp-Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, vol. 4), Swanton (1997), and Mitchell-Robinson (2006) read *hēofung-dagas* ‘mourning-days,’ which is proposed by Pope in his first edition of

The Rhythm of Beowulf (1942). (In his revised edition, however, Pope supports Mackie's conjecture instead of his own reading.) In the light of compound constraints, the restoration *hēofung-dagas* would be less likely because it results in the unacceptable pattern of **hilde-fruma*. There is no way to avoid this metrically anomalous pattern by reference to parasiting or syncopation. Both *here-geongas* and *hearm-dagas* are metrically acceptable. The syntactic phrase *hefige dagas* is not subject to the compound constraint. *Here-geongas* would be tenable because it 'better fits the physical requirements and is superior in meaning to any of the conjectured compounds with *dagas*' (Pope 1967: xxvf.). For fuller discussion, see Terasawa (1994: 20).

EXERCISE: Poetic Compounds for the Drinking Hall

To denote 'mead/wine-hall,' the Old English poetic corpus provides the following instances: *medo-ærn*, *medo-heal(l)*, *medu-seld*, *wīn-ærn*, *wīn-reced*, *wīn-sæl*, and *wīn-sele*. Except for *wīn-sæl*, all these compounds are found in *Beowulf*. The two compounds *medo-ærn* and *medu-seld* are peculiar to the epic. It is important to note that the second elements of the resolvable sequence (*-reced* and *-sele*) occur exclusively with *wīn-*, while those of the non-resolvable sequence (*-ærn*, *-heal(l)*, *-seld*) form compounds with *medo-* as well as with *wīn-*. The absence of **medo-reced* and **medo-sele* is due to the constraint on the sequence of the *here-toga* pattern.

EXERCISE: Helle Sequence

It is important to note that alliteration does not fall on the first element of *helle fȳr* but on the preceding adjective *grim* 'fierce,' which alliterates with *gearn* 'ready.' In Old English poetry, it is extremely rare for the first element of a compound to fail to alliterate. When *gūð* 'battle,' one of the most productive first elements, forms compounds, for instance, it invariably alliterates on the sound /g/ except for *Gūþlāf* (*Finn* 16). Thus, the alliterative pattern in *Christ C* 1269 points to the syntactic analysis of *helle fȳr*.

Chapter 6

EXERCISE: Uninflected Past Participle

The past participle *forgrunden* is uninflected probably because the

inflected form *forgrundenne* would result in an unmetrical verse: no Type A half-line is allowed to end with two unstressed syllables:

**wundun forgrundenne*. Nor is the Type D*1 analysis with a secondary stress on the second syllable of *-grundenne* plausible because Type D verses are rarely expanded by a disyllabic dip immediately after the first lift (see Campbell 1938: 19).

EXERCISE: Weak Adjectives without a Demonstrative

When weak adjectives follow nouns, the demonstrative occurs either before or after nouns in *Beowulf*, as in *ac se maga geonga* ‘but the young kinsman’ (2675a) and *in sele þām hēan* ‘in the high hall’ (713b). The insertion of a demonstrative after the noun would

result in a half-line of unknown type: **bēahsele se beorhta*. If the demonstrative was inserted before the noun, the verse would be of Type A2 with anacrusis. But in verse 1177a with *-sele* resolved, the first syntactic group (i.e., *bēahsele*) is of the same metrical length as the second (i.e., *beorhta*). Under this circumstance, as mentioned in 3.4, anacrusis is quite rare:

**se bēahsele beorhta*.

EXERCISE: Multiple Negation

As the line lacks alliteration, *nænigum* is to be emended to *ænigum* to provide vocalic alliteration. This emendation has been adopted by most editors although Swanton retains the original reading because ‘lack of alliteration in a second half-line is by no means uncommon in VB verse’ (1996: 121). The conjecture is syntactically sound in consideration of the reluctance to multiply negatives in poetry.

EXERCISE: Is *Se* a Demonstrative or a Relative Pronoun?

Krapp-Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, vol. 4), Jack (1994), Mitchell-Robinson (2006), and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008) put a semi-colon after *ȝðgewinne*, taking *se* as a demonstrative pronoun (‘it was within full of ornaments and gold filigrees’) while Wyatt-Chambers (1920) and Wrenn-Bolton (1996) place a comma after verse 2412a, taking *se* as a relative pronoun. Swanton (1997) follows the latter with the translation ‘which within was full of decorated objects and filigree.’

EXERCISE: Kuhn’s Laws and Textual Criticism

The addition of *selfa* between two particles results in the violation of Kuhn's First Law. (If displaced, the auxiliary *mōst* would receive rhythmic stress, which would result in an unattested verse type.) As Donoghue suggests concerning the position of *selfa*, '[p]lacing it after *mōst* would eliminate the violation and preserve the alliteration and sense of Krapp's emendation' (1987b: 15). The verse *ac þū mōst [selfa] heonan* belongs to Type B.

EXERCISE: Kuhn's Laws and Punctuation

As it begins with a preposition, verse 1913b cannot be clause-initial. According to Kendall (1991: 40), if *lyftgeswenced* is taken as 'wind-battered' and linked to the following verse (with the comma shifted after *geþrang*), verse 1913b ceases to be clause-initial and there is no violation of Kuhn's Second Law:

cēol up geþrang,
lyftgeswenced on lande stōd.
[The ship drove up (ashore); wind-battered, (it) rested on land]

This reading and punctuation have been adopted in Jack (1994) and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008). Bosworth-Toller also gloss *lyftgeswenced* as 'weather-beaten.'

Chapter 7

EXERCISE: The 'G' Test for Dating

Velar and palatal *g* alliterate in lines 2 (*ġifena*, *ġinnan*, *grunde*, and *gearwe*), 22 (*goldwine*, *gumena*, and *ġytesālum*), 9 (*ġirwan* and *gumena*), 238 (*onġēaton* and *grame*), and 279 (*gold-*, *-ġifan*, *gāstes*, and *ġēsne.*). Griffith (1997: 26, n. 90) does not approve the alliteration of different *g*'s in lines 22 and 279. In line 149, however, the alliteration of two different *g*'s results in an anomalous metrical pattern where the second lift of the off-verse (occupied by *gān*) alliterates with *ġinnan* and *tōġēanes*. It follows that the poet made velar and palatal *g* alliterating but 'was reluctant to use this phonetic license freely' (Griffith 1997: 26). If late Old English poets were able to follow traditional metrical practice, the choice between the traditional and later alliterative pattern would be a matter of personal poetic style. The fact that a verse text exhibits alliteration between two different *g*'s does not

necessarily indicate that it was composed early, but it might be safe to assign a late composition date to verse texts that consistently avoid alliterating velar *g* with palatal *g*.

EXERCISE: Cynewulf's Signed Poems

A single author might change his/her style during his/her writing career. Cynewulf might have composed the signed poems at significantly different stages, which might account for the linguistic discrepancies. On the other hand, an author might imitate his/her predecessor's style. Hence linguistic and stylistic similarities do not necessarily point to single authorship.

EXERCISE: Metrical Anomalies in the Late Poetry

Listed below are metrical anomalies in the *Death of Alfred*:

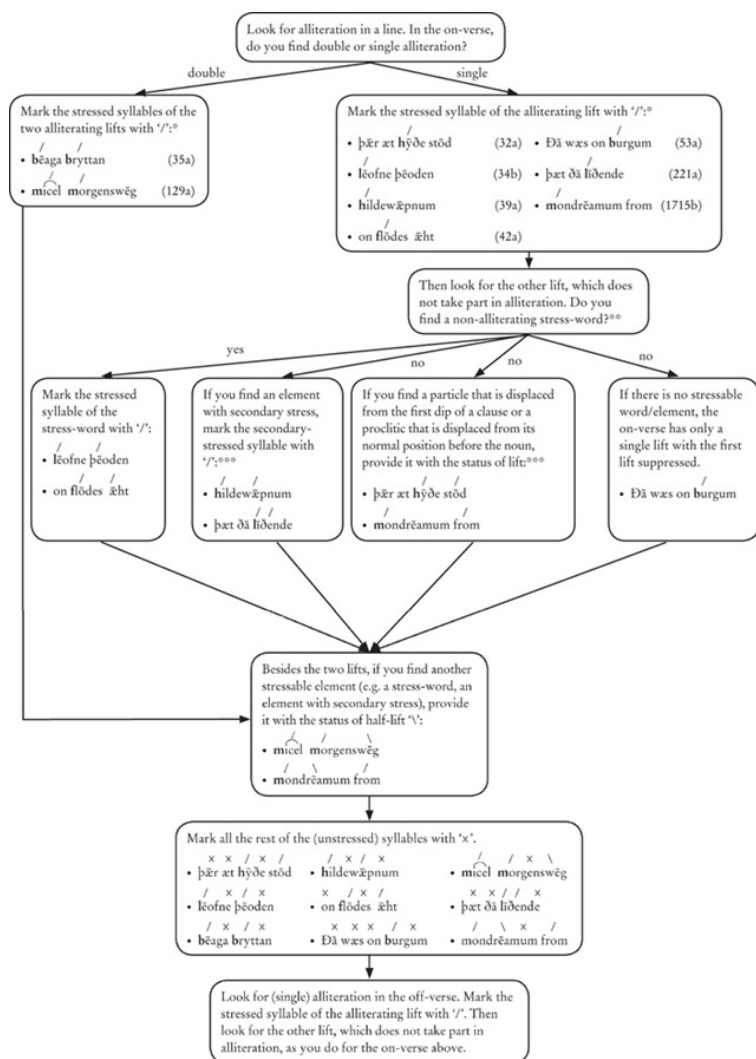
Use of rhyme instead of alliteration to link the half-lines (ll. 6, 8). Probably imperfect rhyme in lines 7 (between *(tōdr)āf* and *(ofsl)ōh*) and 12 (between *(c)ōmon* and *(n)amon*).

Use of both rhyme and alliteration to link the half-lines (ll. 9, 10). Note that line 11 is the only instance where alliteration alone links the half-lines.

Anacrusis in the off-verse (8b, 11b)

Anacrusis before Type E (11a)

Appendix B Some Tips for Scanning Half-lines, with Sample Scansions



Hypermetric verses are excluded. Each of the examples above,

which is cited from *Beowulf*, is referred to the book.

* Lift falls on a long syllable or two resolved syllables.

** Stress-words include nouns, adjectives, non-finite verbs (i.e. infinitives and participles), many adverbs, and heavy pronouns like *gehwylc* and *gehwæper*.

*** Elements with secondary stress include second compound elements, certain suffixes such as *-ende*, *-en*, *-ra/-est*, *-ig*, *-ing*, *-lice*, *-nes*, *-sum*, and the (historically long) penultimate syllable of Class II weak verbs.

**** Particles include finite verbs, demonstrative adverbs, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and some conjunctions. Proclitics include prepositions, demonstratives, possessives, copulative conjunctions, and prefixes. Undislocated particles and proclitics may sometimes bear rhythmic stress for emphasis.

Appendix C Glossary of Metrical Terms

Alliteration: A repetition of the same sound at the beginning of two or more stressed words in a line. The initial consonant clusters *sc-*, *sp-*, and *st-* may alliterate only with themselves. In classical poetry, palatal *g* and *c* alliterate with velar *g* and *c* respectively. Vocalic alliteration can take place between different vowels/diphthongs. See [chapter 2.1](#).

Alliterative Rule of Precedence: A nominal (including an adjective, a participle, an infinitive, as well as a noun) normally takes precedence in alliteration over a finite verb. See [2.3](#).

Anacrusis: One or two extrametrical unstressed syllables that occasionally appear before the initial lift in verses of Types A and D. See [3.4](#).

A-verse: See **On-verse**.

B-verse: See **Off-verse**.

Caesura: a pause between the on-verse and the off-verse, usually indicated by spacing in edited texts.

Contraction/contracted: After the loss of intervocalic *h* or *w*, originally disyllabic words like *hēahan* undergo contraction to become monosyllabic, i.e., *hēan*. In Old English poetry, earlier uncontracted (disyllabic) forms are often assumed for the sake of metre. See [4.2.1](#).

Crossed alliteration: An ornate alliterative pattern where all four lifts in a line participate in alliteration in the pattern [AB: AB]. See [2.2.2](#).

Dip: A rhythmically unstressed part (marked with a cross ‘×’ or crosses ‘× ×’, ‘× × ×’, etc.), comprising one or more unstressed syllables. See **Lift**.

Double alliteration: Occurrence of two alliterating lifts in a half-line. Double alliteration is allowed only in the on-verse.

Epenthetic: See **Parasiting/parasitic/parasite**.

First half-line: See **On-verse**.

Foot: A metrical unit smaller than a half-line but larger than a syllable. A foot usually consists of two metrical positions, i.e., the lift and the dip. See 3.2.2.

Four-syllable Principle: A rudimentary requirement that each half-line must satisfy. As each of the four metrical positions in a half-line is occupied by at least one (stressed or unstressed) syllable, a normal half-line must consist of four syllables at a minimum. See 4.1.

Half-lift: A half-lift is a syllable bearing a rhythmic stress that is subordinate to two other lifts in a half-line. A half-lift (marked with a backward stroke ‘\’) most often falls on the root syllable of the second compound element but sometimes on the derivative syllable of certain suffixes.

Heavy verse: A verse with two lifts and a half-lift. See **Light verse** and **Normal verse**.

Hypermetric verse: A verse containing more than two feet and four metrical positions. Most hypermetric verses occur in sequence. See 3.5.

Kaluza’s Law: According to Kaluza, the application of resolution depends on the metrical structure of the resolvable sequence. If a resolvable sequence ends with a long unstressed syllable, resolution does not take place. On the other hand, if the second syllable of the resolved sequence is short, resolution takes place. The law is generally inapplicable outside *Beowulf*. See 4.2.4.

Kuhn’s Laws: Kuhn formulates two rules concerning the placement of particles and proclitics in a verse clause. His first law states that particles must be placed together in the first dip of a clause while his second law states that at the beginning of a clause, the dip must contain particles. Although Kuhn’s First Law is generally observed, the second law admits quite a few exceptions. See 6.5.2.

Left Dominance: If an on-verse contains two nominals, say a noun and an adjective, alliteration falls on both words or on the word at the left, but not on the word at the right alone. See 2.3.

Lift: A rhythmically stressed syllable in a line, which can participate in alliteration. A lift (marked with a stroke ‘/’) normally requires a long syllable or two resolved syllables. See **Dip**.

Light verse: A verse with only one (primary) lift. See **Heavy verse** and **Normal verse**.

Linked alliteration: An intricate use of alliteration where the initial sound of the second lift in the off-verse anticipates the alliteration in the following line. See [2.2.2](#).

Long (or heavy) syllable: A syllable is long if it has a long vowel/diphthong or has a short vowel/diphthong closed by a consonant. Rhythmic stress normally falls on a long syllable.

Normal verse: A verse with two lifts. See **Heavy verse** and **Light verse**.

Off-verse: The second half of a line, also known as the b-verse or the second half-line.

On-verse: The first half of a line, also known as the a-verse or the first half-line.

Parasiting/parasitic/parasite: In the course of Old English, a word-final liquid or nasal became syllabic and a parasite vowel was inserted, as in *wundor* and *māðþum*. In Old English poetry, earlier nonparasiting forms like *wundr* and *māðþm* are often assumed for the sake of metre. See [4.2.2](#).

Particle: Particles lie midway between stress-words and proclitics: although not subordinated to any element, they do not have fully semantic force and hence usually fail to receive stress. If they are displaced from the first dip of a clause, however, particles bear rhythmic stress. Particles include finite verbs, demonstrative adverbs, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and some conjunctions.

Proclitic: Proclitics appear immediately before a stress-word so as to depend on it. They do not normally receive rhythmic stress unless they are displaced from their normal position before the noun. Proclitics comprise prepositions, demonstratives, possessives, copulative conjunctions (e.g., *ne*, *ond*), and prefixes.

Resolution: In Old English metre, a sequence of two syllables of which the first is short (i.e., ends with a short vowel or diphthong) is often regarded as equivalent to a single long syllable and thus may share rhythmic stress. The two resolved syllables are often joined with an arc.

Rhyme: End-rhyme plays a restricted role in Old English verse,

usually serving as an optional embellishment to the verse-organizing alliteration. See [2.4](#).

Secondary stress: Secondary stress falls on the root syllable of the second compound element. See **Tertiary stress**.

Second half-line: See **Off-verse**.

Short (or light) syllable: A syllable is short if it ends with a short vowel or diphthong.

Stress-word: Stress-words are always rhythmically stressed, including nouns, adjectives, non-finite verbs (i.e., infinitives and participles), many adverbs, and some ‘heavy’ pronouns (e.g., *gehwylc*, *gehwæper*).

Syncopation/syncopated: In Old English poetry, although they were syncopated or deleted in the poem as originally composed, short medial unstressed vowels are restored by the scribes. Such vowels can be ignored in scansion. See [4.2.3](#).

Tertiary stress: A type of secondary stress that can sometimes be metrically ignored. Constituents that bear tertiary stress are derivative suffixes such as *-ende*, *-en*, *-ra/-est*, *-ig*, *-ing*, *-lice*, *-nes*, *-sum*, and the penultimate syllable of Class II weak verbs. See [4.4](#).

Transverse alliteration: An ornate alliteration pattern where all four lifts in a line participate in alliteration in the pattern [AB: BA]. See [2.2.2](#).

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- 1 Stockwell and Minkova (1997a) provide a convenient summary of the Sievers-Bliss theory along with alternative theories. Bredehoft (2005b) is the most recent introduction to Old English metre, which can help non-specialists to scan half-lines properly on the basis of Sievers-Bliss's, Russom's, and his own system.
- 2 Fulk (1997) illustrates with scepticism the prevalence of textual conservatism in recent years. For conservative attitudes, see Hoops (1932), Gneuss (1973), Stanley (1984), Niles (1994), and most recently Kiernan (2004). Among the few liberals are Sisam (1946, 1953) and Lapidge (1991, 1993, 1994). While Stanley states that every scribe, 'sleepy and careless as he may have been at times, knew his living Old English better than the best modern editor of Old English verse' (1984: 257), Lapidge recommends that we should 'liberate ourselves from the premise that the work of sleepy and careless scribes should be venerated above our own judgement' (1993: 157). Niles takes a conservative stance not 'out of a blind respect for medieval scribes' but 'out of regard for the singers or speakers the traces of whose words may linger in scribal records' (1994: 453).
- 3 Stanley (1992: 281).

- 1 The *Beowulf* text used is Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008). Other verse instances to be given later are cited chiefly from Krapp-Dobbie (1931–53). For short titles of prose texts as well as verse texts, I follow Healey-Venezky (1980).
- 2 In manuscript, verse texts are written continuously without line or half-line divisions, like prose texts. Some manuscripts (e.g., the Junius MS) systematically mark the divisions with a certain punctuation.
- 3 This use of the asterisk differs from its use in historical linguistics where the asterisk denotes that the form is not recorded but is a probable reconstruction. The two uses, however, agree in showing that the form marked with the symbol is not attested.
- 4 In *Beowulf*, on the other hand, the inflected (manuscript) form has sometimes been changed to the uninflected form for the sake of metre. See Bliss (1967: § 44) and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008: 328–9, § 21).
- 5 Kiernan, however, admits non-alliterating lines as ‘intelligent variation rather than scribal corruption’ (1996: 185). Niles (1994) also regards the manuscript reading *handgripe* as preferable since it indicates ‘a rough and ready quality in the poet’s artistry that reveals itself in an indifference to alliterative norms even when these norms could easily be satisfied’ (1994: 457–8).
- 6 For the editorial readings of *Beo* 1546a, see the *apparatus criticus* of Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008: 53). Niles follows the manuscript, stating that ‘[t]he rule that a verse requires a minimum of four syllables is a modern one, and there is no way to test for a consciousness of it on the part of Anglo-Saxon poets’ (1994: 459).

- 1 According to Bliss (1962: § 14), ‘the two sounds [velar and palatal g] alliterate freely together until about the year 1000.’
- 2 In *cynne*, *c* remained unpalatalized /k/ because *y* resulted from *i*-umlaut (cf. Gmc **kunjam*).
- 3 In *Beowulf*, *ondlean* ‘requit’ and *ondslyht* ‘counterblow,’ both of which alliterate with vowels, are always spelled with initial *h*- in the manuscript (cf. ll. 1541, 2094, 2929, 2972).
- 4 The usage of the terms ‘crossed alliteration’ (sometimes ‘cross alliteration’) and ‘transverse alliteration’ varies among scholars; Lehmann and Tabusa (1958) and Le Page (1959) use ‘crossed alliteration’ for both types; Cassidy and Ringler (1971) employs ‘transverse alliteration’ as an umbrella term; Baker (2007) calls [AB: AB] ‘transverse alliteration’ and [AB: BA] ‘crossed alliteration.’
- 5 Creed (1993) discusses the use of linked alliteration (‘enjambéd alliteration’ in his term) in *Beowulf*.
- 6 See Russom (1987: 71). Donoghue (1990: 71), however, finds Russom’s tree-based analysis problematic because the first lift of the off-verse, which has often been regarded as metrically most prominent, is governed by a weak node. From the viewpoint of verse composition, however, it would be more natural that the first lift of the on-verse linearly preceding that of the off-verse be a determining factor in alliteration. See Fujiwara (1990: 231).
- 7 Pope-Fulk (2001) use the term ‘Rule of Precedence’ for our Left Dominance.

- 1 The classification into ‘stress-words,’ ‘particles,’ and ‘proclitics’ is roughly based on that made by Kuhn (1933).
- 2 Pope (1966) and Bliss (1967) prefer the scansion with stress on *un-*.
- 3 Here the foot boundary is drawn according to Sievers’s theory. As we shall see in 4.3, some scholars do not allow rising feet.
- 4 Type D2 in our notation is called Type D4 by Sievers, who reserves Types D2 and D3 for minor variants of Type D1.
- 5 Sievers (1885, 1893).
- 6 See Stanley (1974, 1992) and Donoghue (2006).
- 7 Russom (2002a: 315) questions rhythmic stress on the short medial syllable of Class II weak verbs.
- 8 Bliss (1967) scans this verse as Type E (3E2 in his notation).
- 9 Cable (1972) merges Type D2 into Type E to simplify Sievers’s five types.
- 10 If analysed as Type E, however, this verse is an exceptional form where the first lift is immediately followed by an unstressed syllable. Cassidy and Ringler think that the weak syllable ending in *n* is ‘easily slurred in the rhythm’ (1971: 286).
- 11 *Mald* 11b, 32b, 55b, 72b, etc.
- 12 In *Beowulf*, there occur nine possible instances of Type E with anacrusis (501b, 662a, 932b, 949b, 1236a, 1329b, 1830b, 1941b, 2441a). Bliss, however, takes them as Type B ‘since disyllabic anacrusis is exceedingly rare, and trisyllabic anacrusis unparalleled’ (1967: § 50).
- 13 Bliss (1967: § 46).

- 1 See also *Beo* 25b, 112b, 386b, 528b, 629b, 820a, 1036b, 1180a (resolved), 1264b, 1883a, 2034b, 2054b.
- 2 First proposed by Sievers (1885: 232, 312).
- 3 Sedgefield (3rd ed., 1935), Pope (1966: 320, 372), Fulk (1992: §§ 205, 276), and Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008: 174).
- 4 More precisely, if the ending of a resolvable sequence is *historically* long, resolution is blocked. Thus, in *gearo gýrnwræce* 'ready for the revenge for injury' (*Beo* 2118a), *-wræce* does not undergo resolution because the genitive singular ending *-e* of the *o*-stem feminine noun originates in Proto-Germanic *-ôz* and is historically long.
- 5 See Kaluza (1909), Pope (1966), Bliss (1967), Nakagawa (1982), and Russom (1987), among others.
- 6 Suzuki (1996a: 149–58).

- 1 As noted in the preface, the poets' choice (or avoidance) of certain metrical patterns is not considered to be a deliberate act but an intuitive process.
- 2 McIntosh (1949: 120).
- 3 The line is quoted from Cassidy and Ringler (1971: 243).
- 4 *Mald* 14, 83, 235, 272; *DAlf* 21; *JDay II* 83; *LPr II* 100; *MCharm* 11 42.
- 5 This is not the case with *ā* and *āwa*. Besides the unique instance in *Beowulf* (955a), there are some sixty instances of *āwa* (particularly in the *Paris Psalter*), many of which, unlike other adverbs in *-a* such as *gēna* and *gīeta*, occur in verses where the use of the shorter form would be metrically possible.
- 6 *GenA* 2248, 2652; *And* 422, 475; *GuthA* 155, 233, 446; *GuthB* 1270; *Rid* 40 58; *PPs* 93.13.1; *Sol II* 250.
- 7 *Beo* 51b, 245a, 255a, 568b, 1013b, 1346a, 1355a, 1798a, 1945a, 2022b, 2895a, 3113b.
- 8 Bliss (1967: Appendix C, Table II). See also Hutcheson (1995: 198–203).
- 9 Kendall (1991: 246) classifies this verse as Type C (C¹ in his notation) without placing rhythmic stress on the finite verb *secgað*. Under this analysis, the use of the longer *sæliðende* would still cause metrical difficulty because the verse-final dip of Type C never consists of more than one unstressed syllable (**secgað sæliðende*).
- 10 Since the second dip in a Type B verse is usually allowed to contain only one or two unstressed syllables, the use of the longer *wigende* in *Andreas* (1053b) could not be metrical. According to Hutcheson (1995: 128), however, *Andreas* provides two examples of a Type B verse with a trisyllabic second dip (cf. *And* 493a, 499a).
- 11 For a detailed examination of *lēas-scēaweras*, see Terasawa (2007b).
- 12 For reasons other than metrical factors, see Terasawa (2001: 201–5).
- 13 If the word order is reversed, however, the verse would fit

within Type A (cf. *hearperamærost*^{ˈ x x ˈ x}, *KtPs* 4b).

- 14 Verses of this type are attested in the *Meters of Boethius*, a mosaic verse text: *fēohgītserē*^{ˈ x ˈ x} ‘the miser’ (8.55b) and *wōruldgītserē*^{ˈ x ˈ x} ‘the covetous man’ (14.1b).
- 15 *GenA* 1961; *Ex* 14, 254; *Dan* 108, 527, 655, 724; *And* 8, 1458; *GuthB* 902; *Jul* 225; *Beo* 839; *Jud* 47, 194; *MSol* 119.
- 16 I exclude *her-togan* and *her-togen*, both of which consist of metrically acceptable sequences.
- 17 *Bo* 7.12; 46.22.
- 18 The *Meters* poet, on the other hand, makes occasional alternations to the prose source for the sake of metre, cf. 5.1, 6.1.3, 6.2, 6.3.
- 19 Fulk, Bjork, and Niles (2008) underdot and ignore the connecting -e. The manuscript reading is, on the other hand, retained by Krapp-Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, vol. 4), Nickel (1976–82), Kiernan (2004), and Slade (2002–3).
- 20 *LPr II* 112 and *Instr* 42.
- 21 Cook (1889); Timmer (1978); Grein (1861–4); Bosworth-Toller; Clark Hall-Meritt; Healey-Venezky. The most recent edition of *Judith* by Griffith supports my syntacticphrase analysis (1997: 125).
- 22 Cook (1919); Kent (1889); Grein (1861–4); Bosworth-Toller; Clark Hall-Meritt; Healey-Venezky.
- 23 Healey-Venezky takes this sequence as a syntactic phrase while Cook (1900), Grein (1861–4), Bosworth-Toller, and Clark Hall-Meritt give it as a compound.

- 1 Note also that if the regular plural form were used, the second dip of the Type A halfline would contain two unstressed syllables to give an unmetrical verse: **pēostrum forpȳlmedē*.
- 2 Mitchell (1985: § 36) ascribes the agreement/non-agreement of the past participles in *Elene* 383b and 556b to metre without further explanation.
- 3 For the statistics of the use of weak adjectives alone in *Beowulf* and other poetry, see Amos (1980: 111) and Fulk (2007a: 273).
- 4 Note also that with the strong form of the adjective the verse would be too short (**brād rice*).
- 5 In *Beowulf*, the weak *manna* always appears as a simplex.
- 6 In prose, the phrase *ānne man(n)* is in very common use although an adjective often intervenes. (*Ānne mannan* is also attested in the prose corpus.) Neither *lēofne man(n)/mannan* nor *earmran man(n)/mannan* occurs in prose.
- 7 *GenA* 2589a; *Fort* 44b; *OrW* 1b; *Wife* 18b; *Husb* 28b; *Jud* 101b.
- 8 Eight other occurrences of *nāfre* are found alone with *nāfre* (*Beo* 250) included, which some editors emend to *næfne* (cf. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 2008).
- 9 On the use of inflectional forms and prepositional phrases in the prose and verse translations of Boethius, see Sato (2002).
- 10 In their notes to the relevant passage of the *Seafarer*, Cassidy and Ringler (1971) suggest that the the choice between different cases after the preposition might have been made ‘deliberately in order to achieve a stylistic effect’ (332). It is not clear, however, what stylistic effect they have in mind.
- 11 Pope-Fulk (2001: glossary, s.v. *fore*).
- 12 Donoghue (1987b: chapter 3). Donoghue concludes, however, that the poets ‘adhered to this convention to different degrees, depending on personal preference’ (101).
- 13 Since a Type A verse is not allowed to end with more than one unstressed syllable, the infinitive form after *tō* is to be read as uninflected, i.e., *Sorh is mē tō secgan*. See Sievers (1885: 312).
- 14 Bliss (1981).

- 15 Cf. also *GenA* 49a, 1446b.
- 16 The order [×]*sēo* [/]*wēn* [×]*gēlēah* [×]*him* would not be possible even under Sievers's system since an off-verse does not usually take anacrusis, which demands double alliteration.
- 17 Kuhn (1933).
- 18 For a few exceptions in *Beowulf*, see, for instance, 1108b–9 (especially 1109b), where the unstressed finite verb *wæs* (particle) does not occur in the first dip of the clause.
- 19 Kuhn (1933: 44) identifies fourteen breaches in *Beowulf*. See also Hutcheson (1992b: 130).
- 20 Momma (1997: 73).
- 21 See Sedgefield (2nd ed., 1913), Wyatt-Chambers (1920), Bliss (1967), Jack (1994), and Bammesberger (2001). Fulk, Bjork, and Niles also note that *eaxle* in 1537a is '[v]ery likely corrupted from *feaxe* "hair"' (2008: 207, note on line 1537).
- 22 See *Beo* 1128b, 1137b, 1441b, 1872b.
- 23 Kendall (1991).
- 24 Kendall (1991: chapter 15; Appendix 'A Typology of the Metre of *Beowulf* in Relation to the Metrical Grammar').
- 25 As more than three unstressed syllables usually occur before the only lift in Type A3, it is less likely that proclitics alone would occupy the initial dip to make an A3 verse 'clause-non-initial.'

- 1 For alliteration between two velar g's, see *Mald* (13, 35, 61, 94, 109, 170, 176, 187, 237, 262, 285, 287, 296, 315, 321, 325). For alliteration between two palatal g's, see *Mald* (84, 274).
- 2 In the formulaic phrase (*þær*) *ongēan gramum*, the preposition *ongēan* preceding the noun bears rhythmic stress as in *Elene* 43a, *Juliana* 628a, and *Beowulf* 1034a.
- 3 See Campbell (1938: 33).
- 4 Amos (1980: 46).
- 5 Fulk (1989, 2007b: 307).
- 6 Amos (1980: 46).
- 7 Momma (1997: 73, 188).
- 8 Donoghue (1987b: 58–9).
- 9 The table is based on Donoghue (1987b: 77).
- 10 Menner (1941: 5–7) and Krapp-Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 6: lix).
- 11 Donoghue (1987b: 104–6).
- 12 Krapp-dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 3: xxxiif.).
- 13 McIntosh (1949).
- 14 Cited from Cassidy and Ringler (1971). In manuscripts of *Lives of Saints* and other alliterative works by Ælfric, the line and half-line divisions are often marked with points or other punctuation.
- 15 The lineation follows McIntosh (1949: 131).
- 16 Clemons (1966), Kuhn (1973), and Bredehoft (2004a, 2005a), among others. With reference to metrical-syntactic irregularities, other scholars differentiate Ælfric's rhythmical works from Old English poetry including the debased poems (see, for instance, Russom (1987), Momma (1997), and Mitchell (2005)).
- 17 Krapp-Dobbie (*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, 6: v).
- 18 Seventeen verse passages (including six poems in the *ASPR*) are recognized by Plummer (1892–9) whereas Swanton (2000) distinguishes ten poetic passages.
- 19 McIntosh (1949) includes this poem under his late debased poetry. Robinson and Stanley's facsimile volume of

miscellaneous Old English poems includes this poem as well as another *Chronicle* poem known as *William the Conqueror* (cf. Robinson and Stanley 1991). The variant version of the *Death of Edgar* is cited with slight modifications from the D manuscript edited by Cubbin (1996).

1 In the manuscript, *pa gyta* is corrected to *pa gyt*.